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MASTERS AND WORKMEN

A TALE

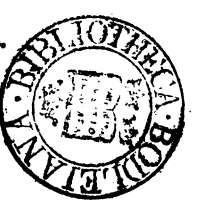
ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE SOCIAL AND MORAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

By LORD B——.

Ay verily, it will be a comely sight in England, when men shall go on as in a better world, bearing with each other's infirmities, joining in each other's comforts.—Sir Walter Scott —Woodstock.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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MASTERS AND WORKMEN.

CHAPTER I.

Honour that knows the path and will not swerve;
Affections, which if put to proof are kind,
And piety tow'rds God
Such men of old
Were England's native growth——
* * * *
Forests of such do at this day remain;
Then for that country let our hopes be bold;
For matched with these shall policy prove vain,
Her arts, her strength, her iron, and her gold.

WORDSWORTH.

ALTHOUGH Grace Dalton rejoiced with proud satisfaction, that Charles Seaton had

at length returned to endeavour to prove his innocence to the world, and regain his former honourable position in society, as long as sufficient evidence in his favour was wanting, her heart still suffered much painful and wearing anxiety. When she remembered how many years had elapsed, since his condemnation, the hopes so long deferred, sometimes entirely forsook her. She saw no peace either for herself, or her betrothed, except in an early grave, where she would gladly then, in despair, have lain down, and been at rest. Then again her natural strength of character resumed the mastery, and the consciousness that she had devoted herself to the service of her beloved cousin and his young sister, gave a pure and noble exaltation to her mind, which though not happiness, enabled her to proceed on her difficult course, with resolute tranquillity. Those who will find peace upon earth, must live for others, not for themselves alone.

She knew that occupation was the best source of comfort, both for herself and Amy, and one fine afternoon soon after they were established in their new abode, she proposed that they should go out, and make such purchases as were necessary to supply the deficiencies in the young girl's scanty wardrobe. This duty performed, they then extended their walk, a short distance beyond the eastern extremity of the town, into a poor and irregular suburb, where long, low, black streets covered a considerable tract of broken ground, on the side of a bleak hill, once an open common. The Colliery of Mr. Dalton, was in this neighbourhood, and many of these houses were inhabited by his workmen. Not the smallest appearance of taste embellished these humble dwellings. They had no gardens, and a flower pot was rarely to be seen at the windows, whilst heaps of ashes and of coals frequently lay before the doors; but they were solidly built; and

Amy saw as she passed by, that they were decently furnished, and clean and orderly within. The women, who appeared from time to time on the threshold, were evidently active housewives, and with their children, looked well fed and healthy, for the air they breathed was fresh and pure, and Mr. Dalton, whilst he took care that all in his employment enjoyed the necessaries of life, endeavoured as far as he was able, to advance their moral welfare, and encourage them to keep far from the degrading influence of debauchery and idleness.

The good effects of such paternal care, and of indefatigable industry, were everywhere apparent, and it was a pleasant sight to see the happy, cheerful, blooming faces, which everywhere greeted Miss Dalton with respectful affection, as she passed along.

"I must go down to those poor streets near the river," she said to Amy, after they had proceeded some way in silence. "The

workmen in Mr. Graves's iron works, are mostly inhabitants of that quarter, and several poor women have lately come to me from thence, in search of assistance, for themselves and their families. Many of the men, I hear, have been for some time out of work, and poverty and bad living have caused a fever to break out in the neighbourhood."

"But Mr. Graves is a very rich man," replied the girl, "surely he does not leave his poor workmen to seek assistance from other people, under such circumstances ?"

"They are no longer his workmen," answered Grace. "He has no longer need of them, and he probably thinks he has done enough, when he has paid the poor rate. I wish to ascertain, before I give relief, if the misery and sufferings of these poor people are really as great as they have been represented to me, but as there may be some danger of infection, I must go there alone, dear Amy. You will have no objection to wait for me here on the

hill, at the cottage of James Carr, my uncle's farming man, till I have fulfilled my sad task. I will return in a very short time."

"No, no, Grace, that cannot be," cried the girl, eagerly. "Where you go, I will go! why should I be spared, when you expose yourself to danger?"

"Your brother has confided you to my care, my dear child," returned the lady, "and I cannot deceive his confidence, by exposing you needlessly to danger. So come in here, and wait patiently with these good people till my return."

So saying Miss Dalton passed the threshold of a small brick built cottage, which even externally had every appearance of comfort, and cleanliness. The kitchen they entered had a nicely sanded floor; the deal tables were white and spotless, the chairs were polished by the housewife's rubbing, a bright fire burnt in the grate, on either side of which was a pot and an oven; a tall mahogany clock with a gaily painted

face, stood in one corner, and a range of shelves was shining with plates and kitchen utensils. The smell of the new baked brown loaves, just taken from the oven, was not less agreeable than the scents of a lady's boudoir, although Mrs. Carr, a tidy woman about five and thirty, thought it necessary to apologise to the ladies, for being caught on a baking day.

"Never mind," said her husband, who was at home in consequence of an accident, "I am sure Miss Dalton will be glad to see that her uncle's workmen have no lack of good wholesome bread, though there are many not far from us, that are nearly famishing for the want of it."

The voice in which these words were spoken was mild and compassionate, and Amy when she raised her eyes to the face of the unknown speaker, felt at once interested in his favour.

John Carr, though only a day labourer, was indeed no ordinary man. He seemed born to prove beyond dispute, the existence

of an innate moral sense. No schools had taught him his morality, and yet it was as pure and spotless as that of man can be.

He was a tall man, somewhat bent by labour, and apparently about forty-five years of age. He must in his youth have been very handsome, for his features were regular and his teeth fine, but what rendered him remarkable, even in his working dress, was the fine expression of his countenance. Entirely without presumption, occupied unconsciously with the purest and most exalted ideas, he was simple as a child in his manners, noble from the virtue of his nature, with none of the vulgarity of the half bred citizen, in whom vanity, and pretension, and assurance, have been cherished by a vicious education.

Born of very humble parents, from whom he inherited nothing, but their poverty and honest character, he returned thanks daily, that he had been taught to read and write in his childhood. It was to that, he

often told Miss Dalton, he owed all the happiness and comforts he possessed.

"Even during the hours of work," he said, "a man with a busy mind must think, and when he knows no thoughts but his own, they often turn to vice; when he knows nothing but what he hears, he is ready to be the tool of bad men, and to turn to drinking, for want of better occupation in his leisure hours. My little knowledge has saved me from all these evils."

Miss Dalton fully knew the value of this man, and in the distribution of her charity and her friendly assistance to her uncle's workmen, she had always been greatly guided by his advice. She knew that he was fully acquainted with the former history of Charles Seaton, but nevertheless under existing circumstances, she did not think it necessary to inform him that Amy was the sister of her unfortunate cousin, and only spoke of her, as a young friend, when

she asked permission for her to remain in the cottage till her return.

"I am sure the young lady is most welcome," returned Mrs. Carr, "and you do right, Miss Grace, not to take her with you, for the fever is terrible near the river, and very infectious. Dear Miss Grace—it is not right that you should go into the middle of it, and risk your life which is so precious to many. I am sure if you have anything to send the poor creatures, James would very gladly take it down, for your and his poor neighbours' sake."

"Yes, that I would, with all my heart," said the good man. "Miss Grace knows I would lay down my life to serve her and my old master, any day; for I should have been in the grave long ago but for him."

"I believe you," answered Grace, simply, "but why should I expose you to a danger, I fear myself to encounter?"

"Oh, Miss! with you and me, the matter is quite different. I am used to bad

air and narrow rooms; and I don't fear infection in the least—which is the principal thing. But to tell you the truth, the misery in some of the houses is dreadful, and you have not been accustomed to such scenes."

"Has Mr. Graves done nothing?" demanded Grace, eagerly.

"Just nothing. His overseer of the works went to him, as soon as he came from London and told him that all the men he had turned off work at the beginning of last spring, were in the greatest distress; and that, as they had worked for him several years, when his profits were enormous, they hoped he would spare a small sum to keep them from starving. He answered that he was sorry, and so forth; but that, as to his great profits, it was all nonsense—he had never made more than a decent interest for his capital—and that he must continue to live as befitted his station—though the late hard times had greatly embarrassed him. In fact, he added, that

he had had heavy losses ; and that, as trade grew every day worse, he should be compelled even to reduce the wages of the men, whom he still kept on at the iron factory. He is a hard man, Miss Grace ; and it is such masters as he, that make workmen think about the Charter, and such political changes ; for when they find that they are worked, till their constitutions are ruined over burning furnaces, for the lowest possible wages, to fill the pockets of a man who thinks money makes him of another race from his poorer fellow creatures, and has no more feeling for their wants and sufferings than a horse, they lose patience, Miss "

"And no wonder," rejoined Grace. "God made this world for all his creatures to live, and not to starve in."

"And the more the people know of their Bible, the worse the matter is," rejoined Carr, "for when they ask for bread—and they are given only a stone, their hearts rise in rebellion against such Pharisees and

sinners. I hear Mrs. Graves is going to have a fancy fair, as they call it, to pay a missionary to go amongst the blacks ; but she would do better, to my thinking, to help her husband's poor workmen at home. But there is more vanity than religion in such charity as that."

"Why don't you go to my uncle ?" inquired Grace. "I am sure Mr. Dalton would be ready to do all in his power for these poor sufferers, till better days come round."

"No doubt of that," answered the workman. "He sent down ten pounds last week ; and I would have gone and told him the exact state of the case—only you see, Miss Grace, he behaves so like a father to all his own people—giving his time and his money and his noble mind—to forward not only their bodily comforts, but their moral welfare, that we felt ashamed to trouble him, about Mr. Graves's workmen !"

"You must have no such scruples with

Mr. Dalton," rejoined the lady. "Unmerited suffering and distress, give all his fellow creatures sufficient claims on his bounty. But I will now go down myself, and see who has most need of assistance. We will then consider what is best to be done."

"But you shall not go alone, Miss Grace. I am off work on account of a bad hurt in my hand, and so I will go with you, and show you the worst houses."

"Thank you, James," said Miss Dalton, "I shall be glad to have your company, if your wife has no fears."

"The Lord will watch over him, miss, when he is doing a good act," said the woman, "and it would not do for me to think of fear, for he has been out of one sick room into another, all last week, and he has no signs of fever yet, I am thankful to say."

"Some of the people had a little money in the Saving's Bank," said James, without replying to his wife, "and that has helped

them and their families, so far. I must tell you something very curious about that, Miss Grace, as we go along, for I want to be so free as to ask your advice; so when it pleases you, I am at your service."

"We will set off immediately," replied the lady, and taking a hasty leave of Amy, who most unwillingly remained behind, and recommending her to the care of Mistress Carr, she set off with her worthy companion, on their mission of mercy.

The way from Carr's cottage to the river-side, lay over a high and broken common, where the washerwomen dried their linen on the flowering furze, and the children played all day long in the sand banks, building mimic houses, and mills, and dams, with that instinctive industry, which, in later life, when not overwrought to procure the means of subsistence, or directed to unworthy objects, constitutes in every grade of society, one of the chief sources of human happiness, and human welfare. Heaven implanted this love of

labour in the heart of man, as a means of universal good, and it is in direct opposition to the law of nature, to burthen the industry of the greatest part of a nation, with immoderate taxes, in order to maintain in splendour a small number of individuals, who have persuaded themselves, and each other, that they are born with the unfortunate privilege of living in idleness and luxury—to become the victims of vice, disease, and death.

Yes, labour is happiness! the laugh of the busy child, and the whistle of the merry ploughman, as he follows his team along the new turned furrow, proclaim this truth; and overwork, though it may often bring the poor man to an untimely grave, is less destructive of all that is good and great, and noble in the soul, than the weary idleness of the man of luxury, who, shunning all bodily and mental toil, imposes on himself the tenfold harder and more degrading slavery of selfish vice, to beguile the tedium of the hours, which Heaven bestowed on

him, to be employed for the benefit of himself and others.

Grace Dalton was a beautiful example of the healthful influence of well directed industry. Her fortune would have enabled her to enjoy all the vanities, or what most people call the pleasures of life, to pass her mornings in an easy chair, receiving visits, or rolling in a carriage from house to house, to scatter her cards at the doors of her acquaintance, or to weary herself to death, by mounting the stairs to the drawing-rooms of people, whom she was bored by finding at home. She was fully privileged by her connexions and her education, to hurry during the evening, and the greatest part of the night, as many others do, from dinners to balls, from balls to theatres and concerts, till weary of talking nonsense, and hearing music for which she had no taste, she returned dissatisfied with herself and all the world, to sleep a few restless hours, and then resume the same worthless course, amongst a set of

people she despised, and who value nothing but fashion and appearances.

But Grace had been early taught to have a taste for better things; she had been early taught, the great history of human nature, instead of the prejudices of a class; and she sympathised with her fellow creatures, in all that was pure and noble, and benevolent, in every station of life. She felt convinced that she was not born of wealthy parents, and gifted with all the advantages of education which riches can bestow, merely for her own individual gratification, but that her station and her fortune imposed on her duties and labours, for her own mental improvement and the benefit of others, which it was her purest pleasure to endeavour to fulfil.

These principles brought her a rich reward, in the hour of trial, and had long supported her through trouble and sorrow, with high and holy thoughts, when the pursuit of mere selfish pleasure and forgetfulness must have hardened and humiliated

her mind. In idleness, she might have given way to despair, and sat down and wept over her separation from her uncle, and the uncertainty of Seaton's fate, but her activity in the cause of benevolence cheered her spirit, and trusting in the mercy of Heaven, she pursued her way with calm and steady energy.

The movement, and the fresh air upon the breezy hill, gave renewed strength to her nerves, and the song of the lark, as it soared on high, filled her heart with feelings of thankfulness, and love, and hope.

"It fulfils its appointed course with cheerfulness," she thought, "and so, with God's help, will I!"

Engrossed by such thoughts, she had proceeded nearly across the common, when James Carr came up to her side, and touched his hat, to attract her attention.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Grace, but I told you, I wanted to ask your advice, and now we are alone, I should be very glad

to have a little talk with you, for it is no trifling matter I have to tell you about."

"If you think my advice worth having, I am ready to attend to you, James," answered the lady, somewhat astonished by this address.

"Why, ma'am, it does not in any way regard myself," said the workman, with a slight hesitation. "The truth is, it concerns Mr. Dalton, most of anybody."

"Then why do you not go to him at once," returned Grace, in a quiet voice.

"Because, ma'am, what I should have to say, is, I know, a forbidden subject with your uncle."

"What do you allude to?" was the lady's hasty demand, as she stopped and turned quickly towards her companion, with a look of the most earnest surprise and curiosity.

"I mean the robbery of the bank, fourteen years ago, miss. We all know, nobody ever dares to speak to Mr. Dalton about that."

"Certainly not! What then?"

"Perhaps it might have been better, if master had heard more of all that was said; he might have learnt the truth, which it is my firm belief, none of us know to this day. Poor gentleman, it was a shocking blow to him, no doubt, what with the death of the child, and the conviction of his own nephew, and all the circumstances together! but still, many people never thought that Mr. Seaton could be guilty of such a dreadful crime, and all who knew him well, pitied him, as much as they did your uncle. It is a long time ago! more than fourteen years now, and yet it is very strange, nothing has ever yet come out, to throw any light on the secrets of that terrible fire."

"God has his own times, and his own ways, James; and the innocent must never despair, nor forget that they are under the protection of Heaven," returned the lady, solemnly.

"So I have often said, Miss; and what

I have to tell you now, is a new proof of this great, consoling truth."

"You surprise me," murmured Grace, in a low, earnest voice, and she again stopped, and fixed her eyes upon the speaker.

"The matter is very curious, at all events," rejoined her companion. "You may remember, I have already mentioned to you, that several of Mr. Graves's discharged workmen have been obliged lately to draw their little savings from the Saving's Bank. A poor man of the name of Gibson, a good, worthy fellow, whose wife and two children are ill of the fever, went only the day before yesterday, and received his last three pounds. I sat in the sick room whilst he was away, and when he came back, I think I see him now, he threw the money down on the table, in despair like, as if he thought when that was gone, they must just all starve. I thought one of the sovereigns had not a right sound, and I took it up to examine

it. When I looked closely at it, I observed it was marked, just under the chin of the king's head, with a little cross."

"James, what do I hear?"

"Yes, Miss, you cannot be more surprised than I was, for everybody in town and country knew, that the five hundred sovereigns, which were stolen from Mr. Dalton's bank, were marked in this way, and though it is long since any one has spoken, or thought any more of this matter, I remembered it the moment I saw the cross. Well, Miss, I looked at the second sovereign, and it was exactly the same; and the third likewise."

"Did you tell your friend what you had observed?"

"Yes, Miss, I told him directly, and he saw the marks as plainly as I did."

"And what then?"

"I advised him to go to Mr. Graves, and show him the gold; but he would not hear of such a thing. He said, he would speak to Mr. Dalton at once, in the morn-

ing, for he was a gentleman, who would listen to a poor man, as patiently as to a rich one, but that he had had enough of Graves's insolence already. But in the morning he was fast in bed in a raging fever."

"And what has been done for him?" enquired the lady, with profound interest and anxiety, as to the poor man's fate, both for his own sake, and that of Charles Seaton.

"I took care he had a doctor, and all things necessary," replied Carr, "but I took care, also, to change the sovereigns before the money was spent, and I have the marked ones safe, in case of any accident, or the death of poor Gibson."

"You have them, you say?" returned the lady, as if engrossed, at the same time, by profound thought.

"Yes, Miss Grace; I thought Mr. Seaton must return home before long, if he is yet alive, and it would make him happy for the rest of his life, if his inno-

cence could be fully proved. If these sovereigns can be traced, who knows what may be brought to light, by such a trifling circumstance, for wonderful is Providence in all His ways."

"I must see your friend Gibson without delay," rejoined Miss Dalton; "and there can be no doubt, that my uncle must be informed of your discovery as soon as possible."

"I scarcely know what to say as to your going to Gibson. There are three people ill of the fever there, and the danger of infection is very great. Moreover, as I have told you, it is quite useless for you to see him, as he is not in a state to give you any information."

"No matter!" was Grace's resolute reply. "I should have visited him for charity, before I heard this story; but I have now a double motive, for forgetting all fear. I must now tell you, James, Mr. Seaton has returned to England. He still persists in asserting his entire innocence of

all the crimes for which he has been punished, and is endeavouring to collect evidence to invalidate the testimony that was brought forward against him on his trial.

"Oh, Miss Grace!" exclaimed Carr, with honest joy, "it would be the happiest day of my life, if I were to be the means of aiding and serving him in such a cause; both for the love of justice and the gratitude I owe his father and mother, and all the family. I have known him from a little boy! he was always good, and kind, and generous, and I cannot believe, that the character of any living creature, can change so fearfully, in a few short years. No, no, Miss Grace, depend upon it, there is some hidden rascal at the bottom of all this business, and Mr. Seaton is innocent, as sure as I am a living man."

"I believe you are right, James, quite right," answered the lady; "but I have another observation to make to you. If you desire to serve Mr. Seaton, you must not speak of the discovery you have made,

to any one, except Mr. Dalton. It is most fortunate, that Gibson refused to consult Mr. Graves, for I feel certain, the banker is the very last person, who should be informed of the circumstance, if we wish to derive any advantage from it, for my poor cousin. Since Mr. Seaton's return, he has proved himself to be, not only a very false friend, but an active and bitter enemy, whose only desire is to remove his unfortunate relative as far from here as possible."

James Carr stood still as he heard these words, and fixed his eyes searchingly on Miss Dalton's agitated countenance.

"I am surprised to hear this," he said, at last. "I thought he had been a better hypocrite;" and then, without either of them making any further observation, they proceeded on their way, at a more rapid pace.

CHAPTER II.

But oh, what crowds in every land
Are wretched and forlorn;
Through weary life, this lesson learn,
That man was made to mourn.

BURNS.

THE dwelling of Gibson, the poor sick workman, was one of the neatest in a narrow street, leading down towards the river, in the neighbourhood of Mr. Graves's iron-works. No doubt, in better days, it had been the abode of industry and peace.

Carr, without hesitation, lifted the latch of the street-door, and, followed by Grace Dalton, entered the kitchen, but no one

was there to give them welcome. No fire burned in the grate, the furniture was covered with dust, and there was a still desolation in the whole place, which sadly spoke of poverty, pestilence, and death. Low groans were audible from the chamber above, and thither they at once proceeded, up the narrow staircase.

The scene which there presented itself, was mournful in the extreme, but yet, fell far short of the wretchedness and misery existing in many other dwellings in the neighbourhood, where, owing to want of work, long before the fever had made its appearance, almost every article of furniture had been sold to procure food. Gibson having been a prudent, steady man his little savings had hitherto enabled him to preserve the beds of his family. On one of these his wife now lay in an inner garret or loft, in a raging fever; in the outer room, the poor man was stretched unconsciously on a mattress on the floor whilst on another bed a young girl was laid

out a corpse, and her little sister was sitting weeping beside the companion of her childhood, whose only nurse she had been. It was a bitter grief to the innocent child that she should never hear her sister's voice again, and that the corpse would be carried from her to the grave on the morrow, and no more seen; but for the departed young creature herself, Grace could not help feeling as she gazed on her, and the poverty by which she was surrounded, that she was taken from the earth in mercy. She was very fair, and she had just arrived at that age, when the unconscious light heartedness of childhood is replaced by new feelings, and new dangers. She had tasted the happiness of the years of innocence, and had escaped to heaven, before her hours of trial, and of toil, and of sorrow had begun, before her poverty and her beauty had exposed her to the temptations and contamination of vice.

The poor father was spared the agony of knowing that his favourite child, his pretty

Margaret, had departed before him to the world of spirits, for he lay in a high state of delirium, and Miss Dalton saw at once the truth of Carr's assertion, that no further information could then be obtained from him, concerning the marked sovereigns. Many weeks must probably elapse, before he recovered his reason, even if his life were eventually spared.

Her whole attention therefore, was directed to making arrangements, for the alleviation of the sufferings of the afflicted family. She sent Carr to engage a neighbour from an adjoining cottage, to come a part of every day to afford them all the assistance they required, in their terrible malady, and she herself sat down, and during his absence, sought to console the weeping child. In a few minutes he returned, bringing a poor woman with him, from the next house, whose husband had died of the fever about a fortnight before. Her scanty mourning and wan countenance, at once proclaimed her affliction and poverty. She

accepted Miss Dalton's offers with thankfulness, and without hesitation proposed to remain over the night with the sufferers.

"But pray, miss," she said, "don't think hardly of me for receiving your money in payment of such a service. Since my poor good man died, I have come every day to help the Gibsons, and never thought of payment. I know it is what one Christian should freely do for another, without hope of reward, and I am ashamed, indeed, miss, to take the money you offer me, but my husband's death left me penniless—work is not to be had—and—"

The poor woman hesitated—she could not bear the humiliation of being thought a beggar, and yet she had not tasted food for four and twenty hours. Her husband had worked ten years for Mr. Graves, his health had been ruined by the heat of the fires in the foundery, and his little savings consumed in paying apothecaries' bills. Mrs. Graves had sent his widow a shilling, the day that she made purchases to the amount

of fifty pounds for the fancy fair to assist in the conversion of the Ethiopian ladies.

Grace spoke kindly to the widow, and put five shillings into her hand. She particularly recommended Gibson's poor little daughter to her care, and promised to send that afternoon, a supply of clean linen, and whatever else the medical man judged necessary for the sick.

From this scene of distress, Miss Dalton was conducted by Carr to several other dwellings, where poverty, sickness and suffering existed in their worst forms. In some houses, she found whole families absolutely littered on straw ; in others, hopeless widows vainly striving to appease the cries of their fatherless children for bread; and even where the fever had not yet broken out, the extreme of poverty and want seemed to render its progress inevitable.

But amidst all this misery and destitution, what principally struck the observation of Grace, and excited her admiration,

was the patient resignation of these poor people, who perishing for want amidst a land of plenty, saw death every hour snatching from them some relative, or neighbour, and surrounded by disease and infection, had little hope of escaping a similar fate. Mothers no longer wept over their buried children, but rather rejoiced that they were relieved from the hungry cries of the poor babes, who could feel no further sufferings. Strong men paralized by affliction, followed their wives, or their children, uncomplaining to the grave, and then sat down and prayed for death. They were powerless longer to procure, by their strength and industry, a livelihood for their families, and when reduced to accept the pittance the parish allowed to the poor, the pain of their deep humiliation, was even more keen than the loss of friends, or the visible approach of death.

"Give me work, not charity," said one of these poor fellows to Grace, "and so say all my comrades; but if I can no longer

earn my bread by the sweat of my brow, I had better die, for it would then seem, there is no more place for such as I, upon the face of the earth. Yet God who made it, made us all, and he is wise and good."

Grace made no reply, but she felt there was a profound truth implied in the last words of the workman, and that all great social evils are the result of some long existing error in human institutions, directly in opposition to the wisdom of Providence, and the Divine will. She thought of the great mysteries of liberty and slavery, and property and pauperism, and free trade and monopoly, which had, during centuries been struggling for solution in the secret depths, even of the most flourishing kingdoms, like elements of unrest, and were now agitating all classes of society, in every part of the world.

"Masses of human beings in other countries, have become impatient of hopeless suffering," she thought, "but have yet found no permanent relief; thousands have

perished, as if there was, in truth, no place for them on the face of the earth, because those in power have consulted only their own self interest, instead of that of the people, it was their duty to protect. But in England, the people begin to feel that knowledge is power, and are wisely struggling to acquire this strength, which can alone bear down the old monopolies and exclusive privileges before it, and maintain the welfare of this populous nation, by extending equal rights to all its inhabitants, and opening to them the whole world as a market."

But Grace knew likewise, that knowledge must not only be directed to the improvement of political institutions, but also to the moral progress of man as an individual, in virtue and pure principles of religion, before the sufferings of the poor, can be materially alleviated, and that, whilst the desired results of which good men dream, were still unattained, it was the duty of the benevolent to endeavour to assuage

the misery of their fellow creatures, as much as in their power, from whatever causes it might result.

Inspired by such principles, her presence brought consolation wherever she appeared. The compassionate benevolence of her smile, made even the proudest heart accept her donations with thankfulness. There is no more humiliation in receiving the gifts of love, than the gifts of nature.

Her heart was full of high and holy feelings, when she returned, from her sad mission, to Carr's cottage, where Amy had long been anxiously awaiting her.

As she entered the workman's kitchen, an old woman who was sitting smoking on a log of wood beside the fire, arose and saluted her. She was roughly but decently dressed, in a blue woollen petticoat and short bedgown, and a long eared linen cap hung down on each side of her withered face.

"Lord love you, Miss Grace, it always does my heart good to see your comely

face," she exclaimed as soon as the lady appeared, "but who is this pretty young lady you have brought with you to-day? she says she is a stranger in these parts."

"She is a near relation of mine, Molly," answered Grace gently, for she had no desire to gratify the old woman's curiosity on this point.

"Umph, she is a relation," returned Molly still smoking her short pipe, and keeping her eyes fixed earnestly upon Amy's face. "So she is one of the family, and there is a strong likeness, sure enough, to some of them; but it is very kind of you, Miss Grace all the same. So—a near relation," she muttered, "a cousin mayhap! From father, or mother's side?"

"It is no matter," answered Miss Dalton, who saw that Amy was embarrassed by these questions. "Have you finished the flax I sent you to spin last month?"

"Yes, miss, and I mean to come up with it, to Mr. Dalton's, to-morrow morning."

"You would not have found me there," was the lady's reply. "I am living now at No. 7, Wilmot Street."

"Wonder upon wonder! not living at Mr. Dalton's! Why, what new misfortune has happened. Have those worthless Graveses got you too, out of the house, at last. Oh, Miss Grace, you should not, on any account, have left the poor old gentleman, for when once they get him altogether into their power, they will drive him mad outright, or shortly be the death of him, as sure as my name is Molly Temple. I did not live twenty years in the family, for nothing, miss, and I believe I know more of their cunning, sneaking ways, than you do. Lackaday! Lackaday what have you left the poor master for, at last?"

"Be sure, I left him most unwillingly, Molly," answered Miss Dalton, little pleased with this new subject of discourse.

"But it is not possible he could turn you out of the house, after all you have done for him?" rejoined the old woman,

endeavouring to read in Grace's face, the information, which she knew by experience, she should not obtain from her lips. As she expected, no answer was returned to this somewhat bold question. "Well, wonders never cease, that is certain," she continued, half muttering to herself. "Who would ever have thought I should have lived to see the like of that! But you must go back, Miss Grace," she added abruptly in a louder tone. "You must not leave your uncle to die in those worthless people's hands. There will be fine plundering work if you do."

"Hush Molly—such language does not become you," said Grace, more severely.

"Like enough! it is never right, nor proper, to say what one thinks about rich folks! I learnt that long ago, but I never could help thinking, and may be some of my thoughts were nearer the truth, than those of wiser people, even though they might happen to wear a judges's wig upon their shoulders. Mrs. Carr!" cried the

crone, turning suddenly round to the good woman of the house, "have you heard anything of Lucy Forrest lately?"

"She was here about six months ago," was the reply, "but I have not seen her since."

"She was a pretty young girl, when first she came into Mr. Dalton's family," resumed Molly, "but I always thought she would never make a good end. She was a vain, light, thoughtless creature, but she flattered Mr. Dalton about his child, and whilst he believed that she was attentive to the baby, he never doubted her honesty. It was no use my telling any of her light doings, for Graves persuaded master directly, that it was all jealousy on my part, and so, at last, rather than be thought a liar, I held my tongue. Still, if I had not left and married, directly after the fire, and gone immediately to India with my husband and his regiment, I might perhaps have told some things, that could have been of use to poor Charles

Seaton. Heaven have mercy upon him for a good, kind-hearted gentleman."

"Molly, why did you never tell me this before?" demanded Miss Dalton, eagerly, whilst tears filled Amy's eyes at hearing the old woman speak with so much affection of her brother.

"Where would have been the use of it, miss?" answered the crone. "It is now five years since I came back here, after my poor husband's death in India, and Mr. Seaton had been already nine years in Botany Bay, and to my thinking, he might as well have been dead, for nobody ever mentioned his name, or seemed to think any more about him; and to tell you the truth, Miss Grace, though you are very kind, even an old woman like me, cannot venture to make too free with you, and to talk to you, just like another body. And I respect you all the more for it, for it is not pride, and we all know there is not a kinder, nobler heart breathing upon the face of this earth. But you know your

place, Miss Dalton, and I know it too, for I have seen service!"

"But there could have been no liberty in telling me anything, which could prove of advantage to my nearest relative."

"May be not, miss! But your uncle formerly would not believe me, and so I thought as so many years had passed away, I had better hold my tongue. I may have been wrong, but all I have to say is not much; still if you would like to hear my story, I will come to you at your own house whenever you like. I must speak to you alone, if you please."

"I shall be at home in two hours from this time," answered Grace, with an agitation she could not conceal, for a hope had sprung up in her heart, such as she had never ventured to indulge till then, that it might yet be possible, to discover the whole secrets of the dark plot, by which the ruin of Charles Seaton, and the destruction of her own, and her uncle's happiness, had been effected. She well knew that Molly

Temple had been long in the service of the family, and she wondered at her own stupidity, in never before having thought of the possibility of her being able to give details concerning the burning of the bank. But the story of Seaton was a subject to which, during the long years of his absence, she had never willingly alluded, and even then she shrunk from pronouncing his name, to those who connected it with crime and infamy. It was for this reason, she had forborne from telling Molly who Amy really was; but though the girl clearly saw that her cousin did not wish her to be known, she could not restrain her tears, as she listened to all that had passed, with the most profound anxiety. Her heart exulted with the conviction, that the hour was rapidly approaching, when all shame would be removed from her beloved brother's name, and when she need no longer fear to be rejected with scorn, as the sister of a felon, by those, who might else have loved and cherished

her. She longed with childish eagerness for the moment when her brother could hear what had occurred, and she longed yet more to know the whole particulars which the old woman had promised to recount. Gladly would she have thanked her, and told her that she was the sister of Charles Seaton, whom she so justly pitied and lamented, but she respected the feelings of Grace and remained silent, trusting, however, that she should be permitted to remain in the room that evening, when Molly came to relate her story. Grace now directed James Carr to come that evening for the linen, and various articles she had promised to prepare for the poor.

"And the sovereigns?" he inquired with some embarrassment.

"Since Gibson cannot go to Mr. Dalton, you must," she replied. "No time must be lost. He will best know, what steps to advise to pursue."

Old Molly seemed to hear nothing of this conversation—for she was still watch-

ing Amy with an all absorbing curiosity and interest; but she arose, took the pipe from her mouth and blessed both the ladies as they departed.

"Did you never see anybody that young lady is like?" she said to James Carr, as soon the cousins were out of hearing.

"It seems to me, I have; but I cannot distinctly remember where," he returned.

"You did not know her as well I did," answered the old woman, and she began again to draw in the smoke of her pipe.

"Who do you mean?" asked Jenny Carr, with true female curiosity.

"Oh, it is just no matter! only a fancy of mine," muttered Molly, and she did not speak again, but continued to smoke by the fire-side in silence—her arms crossed on her knees; and her eyes fixed upon the glowing cinders in the grate, for nearly an hour, till aroused by the striking of the house clock.

Then arising, she said it was time to go

to Miss Dalton ; and wishing Carr and his wife a good afternoon, she set off without uttering another word.

"She is a keen witted old woman," said Jenny, when she had disappeared, "but I don't believe she can tell Miss Dalton anything worth hearing after so many years have gone by."

"Who knows," returned her husband; "mere trifles are often of great consequence in worldly affairs, and upset, as if by chance, the most cunning calculations of men. But it is not chance, Jenny—it Providence."

CHAPTER III.

I cannot speak
So well, nothing so well, no, nor mean better ;
By th' pattern of mine own thoughts I cut out
The purity of his.

Shakspere.

THE letters of the young Mr. Vernon to his father, had strongly influenced him in favour of Seaton ; and the explications given him by the convict himself, and his steady, patient industry in his office, all strengthened the lawyer's persuasion of his innocence. But he was a cautious, prudent man, and well aware of the difficulties of the case, forebore to encourage Seaton's

hopes, whilst he secretly sought to collect evidence in his favour by every means in his power.

He was Mr. Dalton's man of business, and he heard, with pain, that this gentleman, instead of executing a will which he had been employed to draw in favour of his niece, Grace, had allowed her to leave his house in consequence of her faithful attachment to her unfortunate relative. Well aware of the intriguing character of Graves, and fearful that, by his evil influence, the old gentleman's irritation against her might be cherished for his own advantage, he resolved to speak openly with him on the subject, so as, if possible, to put an end to any morbid feelings of resentment against his innocent niece. But well aware that the story of Seaton had long been a forbidden subject in Mr. Dalton's presence, he discoursed a considerable time on other topics before he reverted to the real object of his visit.

"You are aware, I presume," he said,

"that I have been some time in London, not a little to the annoyance of your nephew, Mr. Graves?"

"I beg your pardon, his wife is my niece no more," was Mr. Dalton's cold rejoinder.

"You probably know we have fully proved bribery against him, before a committee of the House," pursued Vernon, "and that consequently the election for the town, is decided in favour of the liberal member. Mr. Graves has purchased disgrace, instead of honour and preferment."

"I am heartily glad of it," said the old gentleman, severely. "It is only to be regretted, that such practices are not always exposed as they merit. The undue influence of rank in our elections, is preferable to the vulgar corruption of money."

"No fear—no fear," replied the lawyer, "Englishmen are too good judges of honesty and talent, and respect them too sincerely, for these upstart pretenders to public honours, to maintain them long by

the mere strength of their purse. The moral sense of the nation has detected and exposed the pretensions of far richer and more powerful humbugs than Mr. Graves; and in a land of liberty and knowledge, truth and justice will ever prevail. The conscience of nations is as just a judge as the secret monitor in our own breast."

Graves, it appears, is also embarked in unfortunate railway speculations," returned Dalton.

"To a great amount; and he has gone off to London this morning, to arrange certain pressing money matters. In the present embarrassed state of trade, I have no doubt that his iron works have greatly disappointed his expectations."

"He has derived enormous profits hitherto," rejoined the gentleman, "by paying his workmen such low wages, that he will find it almost impossible to reduce them."

"It is rumoured that he intends doing so," said Vernon, "and the discontent is

becoming general in consequence. Provisions are dear, and the people say they cannot work and starve."

"I have warned him of the danger!" was Mr. Dalton's reply; "but ambition and luxury have blinded him to the truth of his own position, and his duties towards others. Adopting old prejudices, which flatter his self-love, he will not acknowledge that his workmen have rights as well as their employers, and that we live in a time of social transition, when education has not only rendered many fully aware of these rights, but capable of asserting them. He talks of the military, and cannot appreciate the power of moral force."

A slight knock at the door at this moment interrupted them, and old Hannah, putting her head into the room, said. that James Carr, from the Colliery, wished to speak with his master.

"Let him come in," was the reply, and Mr. Dalton turning to his guest, begged him to excuse this interruption.

"I am in no hurry, my good sir," answered the lawyer, "and Carr is one of those men, with whom it interests me, at all times, to converse. There is nothing more beautiful in nature than a simple, virtuous heart."

Carr saluted the gentlemen with much respect as he entered, and approaching the table, remained standing with his hat in his hand.

"I beg your pardon for troubling you, sir," he said, "but something of very particular consequence has happened, which I feel it my duty to tell you."

"I hope I am not in the way, my good friend," said Mr. Vernon, laughing.

"On the contrary, sir; a lawyer's opinion is very necessary."

"Has anything unpleasant occurred?' inquired Mr. Dalton, "you seem embarrassed."

"To speak truth, I am embarrassed, sir," answered the workman, "but not on my own account. But I am obliged to speak

of an affair which we all know is painful to you, sir, and yet after all, it is only conjecture on my part."

"There is only one subject, on which I trust no man would presume to address me," exclaimed Dalton, and a wild expression glanced suddenly from his eyes.

"I am very sorry, sir," murmured Carr, with hesitation, "but it is exactly on that forbidden subject that I must venture to speak."

"Seaton! do you mean Seaton?"

Carr touched his hair with his hand, and bowed.

"There was money stolen when the bank was on fire, I have heard, sir," he continued, after a short pause—"Sovereigns—"

"Five hundred sovereigns—what then?" demanded Dalton in a highly excited state.

"I have heard they were marked."

"All marked. They had been paid into the bank, only the day before, by a ship captain, and he pointed out to me the spot

where they were all marked with a small cross, just under the King's head."

"Then I think, sir, you will see the cross here, and here, sir," said Carr, taking three sovereigns from his pocket, and laying them on the table before his master, and the lawyer.

Mr. Vernon drew a glass from his pocket, and examined them attentively, as one by one they passed from Mr. Dalton's trembling hands.

"There can be no dispute as to the fact," he said after he had looked at all three, "the only question is, if, after fourteen years, you have a sufficiently clear remembrance of the mark, to be able to swear to it."

"I remember it as clearly as if I had only seen it yesterday," returned Mr. Dalton. "Those three sovereigns are part of my stolen property, but to put the matter beyond dispute, I will show you five others, I received at the same time, and from the same person. The morning

after the money was paid I was about to set off on a journey, and changed a five pound note, for five of these sovereigns. I had not expended one, when I was recalled by the fatal news of the fire. I have kept them as an evidence ever since."

So saying, he opened the drawer of a small cabinet, and took out the gold of which he had spoken. There could be no dispute, the mark on the coins brought by Carr, was precisely the same, as on that in the possession of Mr. Dalton.

"How came this money into your hands?" inquired Mr. Vernon, as soon as this fact had been ascertained.

Carr then related the same circumstances, he had previously detailed to Grace Dalton.

"When did this occur?" demanded the old gentleman, after he had listened attentively to his story.

"It is ten days, to-day, since Gibson received the money from the Saving's Bank," was the workman's reply.

"You can swear to this?" said Mr. Vernon.

"I can take my solemn oath, to all I have now told you, sir," returned Carr.

"Fourteen years have passed, and these are the first of the stolen sovereigns, which have come to light," returned the lawyer. "God grant if there have been mistakes in this business, that this circumstance may yet lead to the detection of the real criminal."

Dalton smiled bitterly, as if he had no hope of any new discovery, but he spoke not. Mr. Vernon saw that, as the friend of Seaton, it was necessary for him to act in this affair. He put, therefore, three other sovereigns into the hands of Carr, to replace the marked ones, but desired him to keep the latter in his possession, till Gibson was sufficiently recovered, to make deposition; or till he, in case of that poor man's death, might be called upon as an evidence.

"But remember," he added, "you must

not utter a word to any one, about what has occurred. In these affairs, secresy is of the greatest importance."

"You may rely upon my silence, sir," answered the workman, and his face flushed with a feeling of honest pride. He saw that the gentlemen expected him to depart, but he still lingered, and turning to Mr. Dalton, he said, with some hesitation, "I beg your pardon, sir, but I should be glad to speak with you about another little business, if I knew when it would be convenient for you to see me again."

"Come this evening to me, James, if you have any thing else to say to me," answered Mr. Dalton, "but, at present, I must converse further with Mr. Vernon."

"Then I wont intrude any longer, gentlemen," he replied, and with his usual simple salutation he left the room.

"What is your opinion of this affair?" demanded Mr. Dalton, of the lawyer, as soon as they were left alone.

"I think, that the robber, trusting for

concealment, to the length of time that has elapsed, since this money came into his possession, and perhaps under the pressure of necessity, has ventured recently, for the first time, to make use of a part of it, which has hitherto remained secretly in his possession."

"There can be no doubt that such is the fact," replied Mr. Dalton, and he trembled from ungovernable agitation, as he spoke. "You are probably aware, that Charles Seaton has recently returned from transportation. The coincidence is very extraordinary."

The lawyer started and fixed his searching eyes on Mr. Dalton's agitated countenance.

"Yes; I know the poor fellow has returned," he replied, "but I honestly confess to you, that, till you mentioned it, I had not connected that fact with the appearance of the sovereigns."

"Yet you must confess this is remarkable, and confirms all former evidence

against him," rejoined Mr. Dalton, in hurried accents. "He returns, friendless and in poverty, finds this money—which he had probably left in some place of concealment, and under the pressure of necessity ventures, at length, to make use of it, trusting, no doubt, that, after such a lapse of time, no one would observe the mark."

"It is possible," said Mr. Vernon, "but it is also possible that another may have followed the same course. I tell you candidly, even after all that has passed; I have several reasons for thinking with indulgence of this unfortunate young man; and I know it as a fact, that, since his return, he has suffered extreme poverty, and now earns his daily bread by indefatigable labour. Were the stolen money in his possession, such would hardly be the case."

"The appearance of this money in circulation, immediately after his return, is too remarkable not to awaken suspicion," said Mr. Dalton, whose opinion was evidently unchanged, "and in further inves-

tigation, this fact must be borne in mind, till other proof is obtained, that it was put in circulation by another."

"There is no longer any necessity to seek to prove Seaton's guilt," answered Mr. Vernon. "He has been tried, condemned, and suffered the punishment of the law. More can no man desire. Whatever steps I may take will be, on the contrary, to endeavour, if possible, to obtain convincing evidence of his innocence, which he still persists in asserting most positively."

Mr. Dalton shook his head.

"I see you are incredulous," continued the worthy solicitor, "but I am more sanguine than ever, that I shall be able to prove the falsehood of all the charges against your unfortunate nephew, though I do not yet see my way quite clear before me. These sovereigns may assist me greatly; and it is only to be regretted that the man who received them from the bank is not in a state to give his deposition. But, perhaps, others may have been paid

in the like coin, and we shall discover this before long. Only, my dear sir, I beg of you to leave the whole affair to me, if you have any desire to recover your lost property; and, above all, let me request you to be secret. May I beg that you will not, on any account, mention what has occurred to your relative, Mr. Graves?"

"He is the most active manager of the Saving's Bank, and the very person to whom I should suppose it were best to speak of this affair," answered Mr. Dalton. "Were he informed of what has happened, he could, at once, ascertain if more of these sovereigns are still in the bank, and could, probably, discover by whom they had been paid."

"Excuse me," said the lawyer, in a calm, but very decided voice; "I am of a very different opinion. This affair requires extreme caution. We must make no noise that might tend to alarm."

"But Mr. Graves would proceed, I have no doubt, with all necessary caution, if I required it."

"Perhaps so! and yet, I would rather—I speak as a lawyer—I would rather that no one—not even Mr. Graves—should know anything of this affair in its present state. To speak candidly, Mr, Dalton, we must never, for a moment, forget that the future happiness and welfare of a long suffering fellow creature, perhaps, in spite of all appearances, an innocent fellow creature, and that fellow creature, your own sister's son—may depend on your prudence in this business. Charles Seaton was not the only clerk in the bank; he might not have been the only one who had an interest in destroying certain accounts—or appropriating certain sums of money—and even though condemned by the laws of his country, we must not forget that the jury, which pronounced him guilty, was long undecided as to the verdict—and recommended him to mercy—whilst the judge himself, in summing up the evidence against him, declared that, after all he had heard, it was a case of extreme mystery; and that the evidence of the principal witness

against the prisoner ought to be received with extreme caution. I know this subject is very painful to you, my dear sir, but under existing circumstances, I must be explicit."

"You tell me much, I never heard before," returned Mr. Dalton, after a short silence, during which he had appeared lost in thought. "Overwhelmed by my own affliction, I knew nothing but the fact, that my nephew had been pronounced guilty. From that hour I have endeavoured to forget his existence. No one has ventured till lately to mention his name in my presence, or to revert to events, which once drove me to the brink of madness. Yes, Mr. Vernon, I believe at times, in solitude, reason has given way before the despair and sorrow of a father's broken heart. I saw an abyss before me, but I prayed, and Heaven had pity on a bereft old man. And yet perhaps the madness, in which I should have forgotten all, would have been yet greater mercy!"

Mr. Dalton's voice trembled, his lips were strongly convulsed, and tears filled his eyes as he uttered these words, and when he ceased speaking, he covered his face with his hands and wept. Mr. Vernon was deeply pained by the emotion he had excited; the tears of a strong minded man, like Mr. Dalton, had something appalling; for well he knew how intense must be the agony which wrung them from his heart, and he felt all the difficulty of the task he had imposed upon himself, but actuated alone by humanity, and a sense of duty towards a suffering and perhaps an injured fellow-creature, the good man was not shaken in his resolution, and did not leave Mr. Dalton that morning before he had obtained his promise, to maintain a profound secresy, as to the discovery of the marked sovereigns. Long after his departure Mr. Dalton remained in anxious thought. For the first time, since the robbery of the bank, the truth had been fully spoken in his presence, and for the

first time, he felt there might still be a possibility of his nephew's innocence. For the first time, strange suspicions occurred to his mind, and facts till then forgotten rushed upon his memory, till, lost in a labyrinth of doubt and uncertainty, he started up at length, resolved, if possible, to seek in activity for the welfare of others a temporary forgetfulness of all which in the past and the present was connected with that terrible night of the fire. His own sorrows had not hardened his heart, but had rendered it even more sensible than in earlier years to the sufferings and afflictions of others. He had become indifferent to all the sophisticated wants and personal vanities engendered by an artificial state of society, but to the natural feelings of the heart, to all that was pure, and earnest, and true, his sympathy and his aid were generous and sincere.

CHAPTER IV.

But gentlemen, and ladies *warst*,
We ev' down want o' wark are curst.
An even their sports, their balls, an' races
Their galloping thro' public places,
There's sic parade, sic pomp, an' art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.

BURNS.

THE departure of Grace Dalton from the house of her uncle, was a true subject of triumph to Martha Graves, who less anxious than her husband, with regard to Charles Seaton, had not the same apprehensions as to the assistance he might derive from his cousin. She hated Grace for her supe-

riority, which she felt though she would not acknowledge it, even to herself; and she rejoiced in the conviction, that she had now irretrievably compromised her reputation, and forever lost all hope of her uncle's inheritance. She hated her more than ever, since she had refused to lend her money, for the purchases necessary for her bazaar. Unable to appreciate the noble feelings which actuated Grace's fidelity and devotion to her unfortunate cousin, she considered her conduct as most indelicate and audacious, and exulted in what she regarded as the fall of one, whose virtues she had long felt as a silent reproach to herself.

She no sooner learnt the new abode of her cousin than she resolved to visit her, in order fully to enjoy her triumph over her disgrace, and though it was the race week, when many county families of distinction had assembled in the town to participate in the balls and other amusements, and she had a number of engagements, she still found

time for the indulgence of her malice, and ordered her coachman early one morning to drive to Miss Dalton's lodgings.

As Grace herself had foreseen, it was with some reluctance, that she allowed her equipage to be seen in such a low quarter of the town; but the desire of revenge mastered her pride. She felt somewhat surprised as she approached the house, to see a plain, dark chariot drive away, to make place for her showy equipage. Had she remarked the coronet and arms on the panels, her surprise would have been much greater. As it was, she supposed it might be the carriage of a physician, and thought no more of the circumstance.

On enquiring for Miss Dalton, she was told, that she was engaged with a lady in the back drawing-room, on business, but the servant added, that Miss Seaton was in the front drawing-room, if she would please to wait there.

When Mrs. Graves entered the apart-

ment, she found two young ladies, who, both attired in walking dresses, were standing talking, near an open window. Both bowed as her name was announced, but which was Miss Seaton, she had no means of knowing. The youngest girl, who advanced towards her, and begged her to be seated, was of a middle size, and slender figure, and had a face of such gentle beauty, that even the self-satisfied banker's lady involuntarily regarded her with admiration. Her large, soft, blue eyes, shaded with the darkest lashes, her transparent complexion, and dark, brown hair, united with the inexpressible sweetness of her countenance, rivetted her attention, in a manner for which she could not have accounted to herself. When she remarked the well chosen, though simple toilette of the girl, and the polished, though very distant manner in which she received her, she felt it was impossible, that this pretty creature could be the convict's sister, and whilst she returned her

attentions with more than ordinary politeness, she cast a glance of haughty disdain on her companion, whom she had no doubt must be Amy Seaton. She was a tall, plain young lady, of a very dark complexion, which might well have been supposed to be the effect of southern suns, and was very simply dressed, in a dark silk dress, and very close straw bonnet. In fact, quite a figure, as Mrs. Graves would have expressed it, and when she seated herself with perfect tranquillity, without appearing to notice the great airs of the banker's lady, that lady felt not at all surprised by her want of good breeding, which she attributed entirely to her Australian education. Determined to make poor Amy feel that she was totally unworthy of notice, from a person of consequence like herself, she addressed her whole conversation to her pretty companion, to whom she talked about the races, and all the fine people assembled in the town, wondering all this time, who this fair stranger could

possibly be. She knew that Grace Dalton on her mother's side, had county connexions, and remembering the dark carriage at the door, she felt perfectly satisfied that, at all events, she belonged to the best society, and must be somebody to whom it was well worth her while to make herself agreeable.

Amy, for it was she, well knowing with whom she conversed, answered all Mrs. Graves said, as shortly as possible, and was more than once at a loss fully to understand her meaning. Her sweet smile, and her gentle monosyllables, for Amy could not be uncivil, even to Martha Graves, were, however, sufficient encouragement for her visitor to run on from one topic to another, which she thought most likely to enhance her consequence, whilst she flattered herself that the silent Miss Seaton would be properly humiliated, by the neglect of so great a lady, who was intimate with all the fine people in the town,

and talked about balls and plays, as if they were the sole occupation of her life.

"No doubt you make it a point to see everything, and go everywhere, whilst you are in town," she said, continuing to address her pretty companion, "but I advise you, on no account to miss going to the Bazaar for the conversion of the Ethiopian ladies. That will really be a charming affair; all the first ladies in the town are engaged in it; I am to have a stall myself, and we have been promised very noble patronage. Lady Carlton, who you know is certainly the most distinguished and influential of our county ladies, has been asked to be the president."

"But she has declined," said the silent young lady, greatly to the astonishment of Mrs. Graves, turning for the first time her large, and very expressive black eyes full upon that lady.

"Declined," she echoed, casting a glance of mingled surprise and scorn upon the girl, whom she still believed to be Seaton's

sister. "Declined indeed! I wonder what you should know about the matter, indeed!"

The young lady smiled, with a very ambiguous expression, which provoked Mrs. Graves beyond measure, and then quietly, but very decidedly replied, "I know from the best authority, that Lady Carlton has declined the invitation to be President of this Bazaar, on principle. She has declined, because she disapproves of the whole thing, and not from any feeling of pride, lest it should be derogatory to her rank, to allow her name to be mixed up with that of certain ladies, in every way very greatly her inferiors, who have been the active instigators of this undertaking. She considers that in a work of charity all such distinctions should be forgotten."

"Then pray may I inquire, as you seem so mightily well informed concerning her ladyship's motives, if pride is not the cause, what is her reason for refusing the honour we proposed to her?" demanded Mrs.

Graves, her face glowing with rage at the girl's insolence and presumption.

"She looks upon the whole affair as a job," was the calm reply. "Got up for notoriety on one side, and nefarious profit on the other, by pretended zealots and their vain disciples."

"Very fine! upon my word, most admirable assurance. It seems you have not made a voyage to Sydney for nothing," cried Martha, unable longer to govern her innate vulgarity. "And pray who told you what excuses her ladyship has found for keeping her money in her pocket?"

But to her utter astonishment, the girl was not in the least dismayed by her anger. She remained perfectly placid, only the same unaccountable smile as before played round the corners of her mouth, as she shot a glance full of meaning at her pretty companion, who cast her eyes upon the carpet, and appeared to be considerably embarrassed.

"Her Ladyship prefers bestowing her

money for the relief of her suffering fellow creatures at home," she said, "with the assistance of those, in whose integrity and benevolent exertions she can perfectly confide. She does not think it necessary to extend her charity to Ethiopia, when hundreds of her countrymen are perishing of want and diseases engendered by poverty. She prefers assisting the discharged workmen of Mr. Graves, of whose sufferings I presume you are ignorant; and she confides in Miss Dalton as the minister of her charity, instead of trusting in any self-styled Missionary. But here comes her Ladyship, who, if you doubt my assertions, can explain her intentions more fully to your satisfaction."

At this moment the door, communicating with the back drawing-room, opened, and a lady about fifty years of age, very plainly dressed, and of the most quiet appearance, and calm self-possessed manner, entered the room, followed by Grace Dalton. She slightly bowed to Mrs. Graves, and

then turning to the girl, whom Martha had hitherto imagined to be Amy Seaton, she said, "I fear my dear Louisa, I have exhausted your patience, but Miss Dalton has kindly taken the trouble to explain to me all her views and plans, for the relief of these poor people, which are really admirable."

"We have long known that everything undertaken by Miss Dalton is admirable, my dear mother," returned the plain young lady, to the horror and consternation of Martha Graves, who was so confused that she not only forgot all her intended plans of triumph over her cousin, but was scarcely able to return her salutation with an appearance of composure. There were few things which she had long more ardently desired, than to be for once in the same room with Lady Carlton, and now, actually in the presence of this distinguished lady and her daughter, she would most gladly have escaped unobserved from their presence. Still she fell mortified, that

Grace did not present her, that she might for the future have talked about her friend Lady Carlton. Overwhelmed with confusion, when she remembered the impertinence with which she had addressed Lady Louisa, she stood by, a constrained and envious witness of the affectionate and respectful manner, in which both ladies pressed Miss Dalton to visit them, before long.

Lady Carlton, who by one glance at the extravagant dress of the fashionable Mrs. Graves, had rightly concluded to what class of persons she belonged, took no further notice of her presence, after her slight bow on entering the drawing room, but Lady Louisa was determined not to let the banker's lady thus escape.

"This lady is Mrs. Graves, Mamma," she said, as Lady Carlton was about to leave the room. "One of the patronesses of the bazaar for the conversion of the black princesses, and she had kindly informed me, that she is exceedingly surprised by

your pride, in refusing the honour of being the president of this distinguished assemblage of pious and charitable ladies. When I told her, you had other views, she was much astonished at my insolence, and presumption, and assured me I had not made a voyage to Sydney for nothing, which, I confess, I did not quite understand. Perhaps if you will yourself explain your reasons for keeping your money in your pocket, she may believe you more readily than she did me."

"I beg your pardon, Lady Louisa. I meant no offence—I was perfectly ignorant —I mistook you for another person," stammered Mrs. Graves in the greatest confusion, when the gay girl had finished her story.

"And if you did mistake me for another person, Madam," she returned laughing, "I must say with Marshal Turenne, 'there was no occasion to hit so hard.' It would have been as well to have been merciful, at all hazards. I wish you a very good

morning, and I hope when we next meet, you will explain what you meant about Sydney."

"My dear Louisa, what is all this about?" inquired Lady Carlton, regarding her daughter with surprise.

"Only a little mistake of this lady's, mamma, which I will explain to you, by-and-bye," she laughingly replied. "She will probably be more cautious for the future, and so I wish her a very good moning."

Then turning to Amy Seaton, whom Miss Dalton, from a feeling of delicacy, had simply presented as a relative, without mentioning her name, she stretched out her hand cordially towards her, and expressed her wish, that she would accompany Miss Dalton to Carlton Manor. Her mother kindly seconded her invitation, and the ladies then departed.

"And are you then the real Amy Seaton?" cried Mrs. Graves as soon as the drawing room door was closed, turning with a stare of curiosity and astonishment,

to take a new survey of her unknown relative.

"And why not?' demanded Grace. "Is it possible, that you took Lady Louisa for my little cousin?"

"And where was the wonder, if I did," returned Martha impatiently, "who could ever have supposed that such a shabby, quakerish looking girl, was a lord's daughter, sitting *tête-à-tête* here, in such a vulgar part of the town, with Charles Seaton's sister. Who would ever have thought of such a thing!"

"Yet you pique yourself on your knowledge of the world and good society," returned Miss Dalton, in an unwonted tone of sarcasm.

"Yes, and with reason, when I have to do with ordinary characters, but I confess I am no match for those, who set all the rules of society at defiance. I should be ashamed to be seen dressed such a figure, as either mother or daughter, and who could ever have thought of finding her

ladyship, in such a place as this. I did not even know you knew her, and it seems you are old acquaintance."

"I was not aware, that it was necessary for me to give you a list of my acquaintance," replied Grace, mildly.

"Well, I can only say, you are a most unaccountable person," said Martha, in a very altered tone; for her idea of her cousin's consequence, and her cousin's position, had entirely changed since her discovery of her intimacy with Lady Carlton. "Other people would be proud of such an acquaintance instead of making a secret of it. I only wish I had known of your intimacy before I got Lady Giles to apply to her to be our President."

"Her ladyship, I have no doubt, would equally have declined," answered Grace; "and I confess, that I am too well acquainted with her opinion on this subject, to have been induced to make such a request."

"I am sure she would not have refused

you if you had made a point of it," continued Mrs. Graves. "But it is too late now—only Grace, dear, I beg you will try to excuse me to Lady Louisa. I did make a dreadful mistake to be sure; but, after all, how could I know who she was. And our cousin, Amy, has grown up such a beauty, I never supposed that she was the poor child who went out to Australia. Why have you never brought her to call upon me? That would have prevented all mistakes!"

"Her brother has called upon you," answered Miss Dalton, but Mrs. Graves pretended not to hear, and was busily occupied, for a minute or two, before the looking-glass, in arranging her shawl.

"I called on purpose to say how sorry I was to hear you had left your uncle Dalton," she ran on, after a short silence; "but I hope you will go back to him soon, and take Amy with you; come, both of you, and call on me soon, my dear. And now, I really cannot stay a moment longer,

for I have a hundred things to do, and to think of. So, good bye."

She then kissed Amy, in spite of the girl's evident unwillingness—shook Grace warmly by the hand, and hurried to her carriage, delighted to escape from the awkward position in which she had placed herself, when intent on the humiliation of others.

The mind of Grace Dalton was so pure and noble—so occupied by love for others, —a benevolent desire to advance the moral welfare of her fellow creatures—and compassionate indulgence for their failings—that, had she fully known the malicious object of Mrs. Graves's visit, she would not have resented it. The love of spiritual and material beauty, was a part of her nature; and though everything mean or malevolent, or coarse, which jarred against this feeling, keenly pained her, it excited no anger in her heart, she only sought for the future to avoid the person by whom her sentiments had been wounded; and the vulgar affectations and pretensions of the

banker's wife, had, long before the return of Charles Seaton, made her endeavour, as much as possible, to avoid her society—whilst, from all others, belonging to the same class of newly rich, and newly fashionable, she held herself entirely aloof. But this was from no motive of pride. In the natural simplicity of the lower orders, when united with the good feelings which are to be found in all classes, when not stifled by vanity or cupidity, she found nothing revolting. She felt there is nothing vulgar but what is false or vicious; and that refined manners frequently concealed the greatest vulgarity of mind.

With such opinions she had few intimate friends; but every hour, as she became better acquainted with the character of Amy Seaton, she learned to love her more. The devoted attachment of the young girl to her unfortunate brother, had a peculiar charm for Grace Dalton, who felt that, in this world, there is nothing more beautiful than the unselfish devotion of

a young heart, when the warmth of the imagination and the feelings are yet unchilled by the disappointments of life.

The utter unworldliness of Amy—her entire freedom from vanity, though her beauty was uncommon—her cheerful industry—and her entire ignorance of all the sophistical wants, which young ladies are too frequently taught, in ordinary life, to consider indispensable to their happiness, were rare attractions, of which the innocent girl was totally unconscious. Poor Amy only felt that her education—except in common and useful acquirements—had been greatly neglected, and her high idea of her cousin's endowments, rendered her, at first, somewhat timid and silent in her company. But the gentle kindness of Grace, and the affection, which Amy could not fail to read in her beaming eyes, whenever they rested upon her, soon won her whole confidence.

A feeling of indescribable happiness filled the young girl's heart, when, after

the departure of Mrs. Graves, she sat down to work at a little table opposite her cousin Sometimes she forgot her task, and sat with her eyes fixed on Grace's countenance, with feelings of the deepest admiration and love.

"Dear cousin Dalton," she said, at length, "why did I not know you sooner. You would have taught me to be as clever, and as good as you are?"

"Oh, Amy, if that be all," returned the lady, smiling, "you have nothing to regret. You have learnt much more than I could teach you; though the lessons you have received, may have been hard, they have been profitable. Sweet are the uses of adversity."

"I hope so, dearest cousin," she answered with a sigh; "but I am very ignorant. I am sure, when you were my age, you could speak French and Italian, and understood music, and drawing. But I have learnt nothing of all these things, and should my brother ever become rich

again, it will be too late for me to go to a boarding school."

"So much the better," said Grace. "You would not learn much worth knowing in a provincial boarding school, and you might lose much of value, which you now possess."

"But I thought all young ladies went to boarding schools?" returned Amy, innocently.

"When mothers are unwilling, or unable to educate their own daughters, too many unfortunately do so," answered Miss Dalton, "particularly in what is commonly called, the middle class. But in many of these establishments, where a very limited salary is paid, the education is of the very worst description. The governesses, who are mostly unmarried women, compelled by poverty to set up a school, as a means of livelihood, with vulgar minds, and neglected education, know little, but what they call the routine of a school; give superficial instruction, by rote, to which

the girls never attend, whilst they are prompt to suck poison, from all the petty squabbles and envious rivalries between the mistress and the teachers, and to learn the vanity, the intrigues, and the coquetry, by which they see those set in authority over them, endeavouring to get husbands. I do not say that all English boarding schools are in such a state—but the greatest part of them ; and young women leave them, not only with an indifferent education, but with corrupted hearts."

"You astonish me, Grace," said Amy, gently.

"I know that many would think my ideas of female education overstrained," returned Miss Dalton.

"Tell me, dear cousin, what you think that women ought to learn?" asked the girl, with confiding innocence.

"To fulfil their duty towards society as daughters, wives, and mothers, devotedly, firmly, and wisely," answered Grace. "The soul of a woman, and her reflective facul-

ties, ought to be educated, even more than her talents. Let her be taught no hypocritical cant of religion, whilst the weeds of vanity, envy, and scandal, are cherished by flattery and indulgence—and let her soul be raised above the prosperity, or adversity of life, by fixed principles—a contempt for vain opinion—and the love of virtue. After these foundations are laid, such things as languages, and music, and drawing, may be cultivated with advantage, by those who possess talent—but whatever is learnt, ought to be learnt thoroughly and well—learnt by the reason, and not by the memory alone. Bad and insufficient instruction is only lost time. England would be doubly great, if the minds of all her women were educated, fully and rightly to understand their duties."

"But surely, cousin," said Amy, "all these ladies, I see here, so finely dressed, and those riding about in carriages, have had a good education?"

Grace shook her head, and smiled.

"Successful abilities, or speculations," she returned, "raise many men in this country, far above the position in which they were born, to a station, which the same talent, by which they rose, renders them competent to fill with honour and respectability. But their wives have not the same circumstances in their favour. Raised suddenly, without any merit of their own, they have no redeeming faculties to compensate for the want of early education; and spoilt by the riches and luxury, for which they were unprepared by instruction, they despise the simple virtues, which they might have possessed in a humbler position, and use their fortune for no better purpose, than to indulge the vulgar vanity of wealth. I can call no one of education proud, who avoids such society."

"But there must surely be schools for the daughters of the higher classes, where a better education is to be found?" inquired

Amy, who eagerly listened to the words of Grace.

"These are chiefly in London," was the reply, "and are enormously expensive; but, as far as my experience goes, they are as little calculated to fulfil the high and noble objects, to which female education ought to be directed, as those of humbler pretensions. Though they afford the advantage of the best masters, the instruction is very superficial; and I have known girls, whose schooling had cost three hundred pounds a-year, unable, when their father became a bankrupt, to finish the education of a younger sister, even in useless, showy accomplishments, whilst, of every thing, of which a woman may have need, under the pressure of misfortune, they were not only ignorant, but despised such vulgar knowledge. A healthy mind is very rare, and beyond all price, in this commercial country—where no woman can know to what vicissitudes of fortune she may be exposed. Few girls

are taught any thing, in the days of prosperity, but to be helpless, fine ladies—to dress—to visit—and, if possible, to charm by their accomplishments."

"But you have all these accomplishments, cousin Grace," said Amy, "you understand music, and painting, and a hundred things beside—yet, you are not always dressing, and visiting, and could earn your livelihood in many ways, I am sure, were it necessary."

"I have to thank my good mother for bringing me up at home, under her own loving guidance," answered the lady. "She was a gentlewoman of good family, and refined mind. She taught me early, that in life, as in art, the highest point of civilization, and the most difficult to obtain, is simplicity. The love of simplicity, by placing us high above the sophisticated habits, and vain luxuries of society, renders us independent and content. She taught me, that all human creatures are alike in the sight of Heaven—to respect the

laborious—and if we are not compelled to work for our own daily bread, yet to work if we wish to be truly happy ourselves—and to confer happiness on others. Never, therefore, my dear child, despise honest industry."

"Oh, no—there is no fear of that," returned Amy, laughing. "If I had not been able to make lace, I should never have found you, cousin Grace, and Charles and I might have gone on till death in our misery."

"Poor Charles," returned the lady, with a deep sigh, "I can well imagine all he felt, yet he ought to have known me better."

"Yes, my own dear, sweet cousin," said Amy, kneeling beside Miss Dalton, and looking up with tearful, loving eyes, in her face, as she rested her arms on her lap, "if I had known you as well as he did, he should not have kept me from you so long. Charles had often spoken of you, and though I was very young when they

sent me away from England, yet I remembered you, I am sure I remembered how you ran round a large garden after me, where there were beautiful flowers, and that you sang me songs, which I loved very, very much to hear."

"That is strange," returned Grace, who had listened with earnest attention, "can you remember nothing else ?"

"Oh yes! a man carried me in his arms, and it was dark, dark night, and he gave me ginger-bread—but I was frightened, terribly frightened, I shudder even now, when I think of it, and I cried then—till I fell asleep. After that, I was very happy, for a pretty little girl came to play with me, and we used to gather daisies together."

"Do you not remember your mother, Amy ?"

"Oh no ! I seem to remember a woman, but she was not my mother. I suppose she must have been a maid. I feel sure she was; but I never saw her after the

man took me away. I knew Mrs. Nelson, the farmer's wife, who brought me out to Sydney, was not my mother. But I remember the ship, and how frightened the little girl and I were of the waves. And then, poor child, she died! and when they told me she was gone to sleep at the bottom of the sea, I was no longer afraid of it, for I hoped every time I looked at the great waters, that she would come up out of the deep, to play with me again."

"Was this child Mrs. Nelson's daughter?" asked Miss Dalton.

"I think not!" was Amy's reply. "When I was older, and inquired about her, they never would tell me anything, but till I was eight or ten years old, I never went to sleep, without thinking of this pretty little creature, or of the beautiful garden where I had played with you. But don't you hear footsteps," she added, starting suddenly up, and her whole expression changing in an instant. "It must be Charles; I knew he would come, as soon

as he got away from Mr. Vernon's this afternoon. He promised me faithfully, and he never breaks his word."

"No Amy, that is not a man's step," replied Grace, with a smile. "And you surely have not forgotten we expect another visitor."

And the truth of the lady's words was almost immediately proved by the appearance of old Molly, who in a few moments, after a slight knock, slowly and cautiously opened the drawing-room door.

CHAPTER V.

I speak of thee!
And wherefore not? All then shall speak of me.
The tyranny of silence is not lasting.
And though events be hidden, just men's groans
Will burst all cerement.

BYRON.

OLD Molly was by no means embarrassed when she closed the door after her, and approached the ladies. Her only fear had been, that they were not alone. But though perfectly self-possessed, there was nothing audacious in her manner.

"Oh, Miss Grace, you are a good lady, and a true—" she said, clapping Miss Dalton, at the same time, affectionately on

the back, with her withered hand. "You are a very angel to the poor, and your charity is the more worth, for you don't treat us, as if we were of another flesh and blood, but as unfortunate children of the same Almighty Father, who have hearts and souls like yourself. And God loves those that remember his ways, and their reward is dealt out to them upon earth."

"Yes, Molly!" answered the lady, and tears filled her eyes as she spoke, "whilst seeking to fulfil His mission of love, the heart finds indeed its sure reward."

"You are right, Miss Grace," said the old woman. "'Peace here, and joy for eternity, be your reward, for all you have done for me,' were my poor man's last words, when he blessed me, on his death-bed; and poor as I am, I would not exchange that blessing, for all the riches of the world. May the like gratitude fall to your lot, for you deserve it richly, and have borne your heavy troubles with a patient heart."

"I have been spared from the trials of poverty, at least," said Grace mildly.

"You would have worked cheerfully, for those you loved," answered Molly, "But the troubles of the heart are harder to bear, and they come alike to high and low. When I was a servant in Mr. Dalton's family, we all knew, that you and Mr. Charles Seaton were promised to one another, and when I was living happy with my own good man, I have often thought what sorrow you must be in, about the poor young gentleman, and how bitterly you must grieve for his shame."

"You knew then, what had happened?" asked Miss Dalton.

"We heard everything about his trial, for the first time, when we had been several years in India," answered Molly. "The regiment was up the country for long, and it was seldom that we got any news from home. When I came back a widow, Miss Grace, and found you were not married, but lived so lonely, just to do

good, excuse me, but I often thought, I knew all that was passing in your heart, just as if you had told me. And often I could have cried, when I looked at you, pretty young creature, doing all you could to comfort others, with such a secret weight of sorrow in your own heart. Often and often, I have longed to tell you, that I believed poor Mr. Charles to be as innocent as you were yourself."

"And why did you not?" asked Miss Dalton, in a tone of gentle reproof.

"I feared you would think me bold, and I said to myself, that it was too late to do him any good. Poor fellow, if he is still alive, his time must be out now, and if he comes to seek comfort from his old friends, it may, though, be of some use to tell you all now."

"No doubt, and you promised this morning, Molly, to disclose something to me, which might be to Mr. Seaton's advantage."

"Yes, miss, when we are alone," an-

swered Molly, glancing towards Amy, who though apparently occupied with her work, had listened anxiously and eagerly, to the preceding conversation.

"You need have no reserve. or concealment before that young lady," said Grace, as much in reply, to the old woman's looks, as to her words. "She knows everything."

Molly again looked at Amy with searching curiosity, for more than a minute, and then drew her short black pipe from the recess of her pocket, as she sat down by the side of Miss Dalton.

"I beg pardon," she said, "I forgot I must not smoke here, only I got so used to it, when I was with the soldiers, that I can remember old stories better, with the pipe in my mouth, and Miss Grace, dear, you wont mind for once."

Miss Dalton not only gave Molly full permission to indulge her favourite habit, but procured her a light, and both she and Amy watched her with extreme

anxiety, till she had arranged all to her satisfaction, and then sat for a few minutes lost in thought.

"Well, Miss Grace," she said, at length, "I suppose it is best to begin at the beginning, for perhaps you never knew many things that happened fifteen years ago—which I can tell you; and yet they may be of more consequence, than they seemed to be at first; such as we, that do'nt read books and newspapers, and know only what we see and hear, of all that is going on in this great world, can remember that far better than people that have their minds fuller; and every thing that happened in that time gone by, is now far more distinct and clear in my mind, than what I heard only a week ago. So, as I said, I will begin from the beginning."

"Certainly," answered the lady. "You first lived with Mrs. Seaton, if I remember right, whilst her husband was still alive?"

"Yes, miss, I came first to Mr. Dalton's as housemaid, when Mrs. Dalton was a bride,

and a year and a half afterwards, I helped to lay her in her coffin, poor lady! Her first born babe was then only three days old. Just two months younger than Mrs. Seaton's little girl, which she bore in sorrow after her husband's death. At first we thought Mrs. Dalton's babe would not survive her many hours, and poor master was wild with anxiety. But it lived to console him, and after a time it grew like a daisy in Spring, and a prettier creature eyes never rested on. Everybody loved it, and Mr. Charles, when he came out of the bank, would nurse it, and play with it for hours together. He often said, it reminded him of his own little sister whom he had left at home with his widowed mother, and they were both christened Amy, after their grandmother Dalton."

"Were they like each other did he say?" inquired Amy, who had hitherto listened with the most profound interest to the old woman's narrative.

"There was a family likeness, miss,"

answered Molly, "and no wonder, for you must remember, Miss Grace, that poor Mrs. Seaton was very like her brother Mr. Dalton."

"She was a beautiful woman," was the lady's reply, "although the successive loss of five children, whom she buried before Amy was born, and the sudden death of her husband had changed her greatly in later years."

"But Mr. Charles's misfortune, was the hardest stroke of all," rejoined the old woman; "it was the death of her. But I must go on with my story. When Amy was about two years old, Lucy Forrest came to be her nursery-maid. You cannot have forgotten her, Miss Dalton!—a pretty girl she was, certainly, but silly and vain, and the men admired her vastly. She was kind enough to the child, so none of us servants ventured at first to say anything against her to Mr. Dalton, but we soon saw that she thought more of lovers and nonsense than of anything else. Mr.

Charles was the only one of the young gentlemen at the bank, who paid her no compliments, and she often cried out against him for his pride. Many thought Mr. Graves and she were particularly well acquainted."

"But Mr. Graves was already married," said Miss Dalton.

"Yes, he had been married a year or so; but what matter for that. We all knew there was little love between him and his wife, and that he had only married her for sake of the connexion, and in hopes of rising in the bank."

At this moment the house door bell rang, which old Molly did not hear, but the sparkling eyes of Amy, and the heightened colour of Miss Dalton, showed that the same thought occurred to them both, and probably, both occupied by the same image, they neither of them heard the old woman's concluding observation.

The heart of Grace beat quicker as she heard steps ascending the stairs, and when

Charles Seaton almost immediately afterwards entered the room, though she arose and held out her hand towards him, whilst a beautiful smile of love and confidence parted her lips, she could not trust her voice to bid him welcome.

Amy in an instant threw away her work, sprung with a cry of joy to her brother, took away his hat, placed a chair for him between herself and Grace, and then sat down to look at, and listen to him with unmingled delight. He bent down and kissed her with tender affection; a smile parted his lips as he seated himself according to her desire, and as he gazed alternately on Miss Dalton and his sister, his countenance, though still somewhat sad, beamed with inexpressible love.

Old Molly, overpowered by surprise, had arisen from her chair on his entrance, and for a few minutes failed to recognize in the tall, dark, care-worn man of five and thirty, the handsome youth, whom she had last seen when not much more than

twenty. But when he spoke, when he smiled upon Grace Dalton, and the light of happiness for a moment returned, to animate his features, she felt she knew him, and coming, to his surprise, close up to him, she looked with the most earnest curiosity in his face.

"Mr. Charles Seaton! as I am a living woman, Mr. Charles Seaton!" she exclaimed, clasping her bony hands together, and tears streamed down her furrowed cheeks as she continued her silent scrutiny. "Oh, sir, but I am glad to see you once more," she said at length. "My poor husband would have given much to have lived to this day!"

"And who may your husband have been, my good woman?" enquired Seaton, greatly surprised to find such a strange visitor with Miss Dalton. "You know me, it seems, but I don't remember you in the least."

"I don't wonder at that," answered the soldier's widow; "but my name was

Molly Wood, when I was in your mother's service, and afterwards in that of Mr. Dalton."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the convict, now kindly shaking her by the hand. "I have more friends who remember me, than I ever dared to anticipate. I remember you perfectly now; you lived in Mr. Dalton's family at the time of my misfortune; but time and trouble have greatly changed us both, since then."

"I married away at the very turn of your fate," returned the old woman, now resuming her seat, and drawing it close to Seaton. "I had sailed for India, with my husband and his regiment, before your trial, or, perhaps, our evidence might have helped you; and I only returned a widow five years ago."

"This is curious—very curious!" exclaimed Seaton, glancing at Grace Dalton. "I remember now, Molly, you were engaged to a soldier in the —— regiment of

foot, in the same company with my friend, Captain Gordon."

"The same," answered the widow, nodding her head significantly.

"The regiment was embarked directly after the fire at the bank," continued Seaton, in hurried accents; "And Captain Gordon, whom I called as evidence, that I was with him in his room in the barracks, during the whole of the evening preceding the fire, and that we first left it together, when the alarm was given, was, unluckily for me, on the wide seas on his way to India, a month before my trial."

"And as you probably know, sir," said Molly. "he died before he reached Calcutta."

"Yes, to my sorrow, I know it," was the reply; "for no one then remained to prove my innocence of the vile charges which were brought against me."

"When my husband and I heard all that had befallen you, Master Charles, we were

sorely grieved that the wide seas lay between us; for, as he often told me, he could have sworn that he saw you go out of the barracks that night, after the alarm of fire was given, for he was standing sentry at the gate, as you went with the captain into the town."

"But he is dead, you say?" returned Seaton in a sad voice.

"He died five years ago," said the old woman, with a deep sigh; "and so it is, indeed, no use speaking of that; but, if you will excuse me, Mr. Charles, I will interrupt you no longer. I came here this evening, without knowing anything about your return, just to tell Miss Grace a few things she was anxious to hear; and, if you have business with her, I can come back another time. All times and hours are the same to me."

"Oh, no! no!" exclaimed Grace and Charles, at the same moment; and the latter, whose interest was powerfully ex-

cited, begged he might not interrupt Molly in anything she had to relate.

"Well then." she said, "I will just tell you one thing you will, most likely, be glad to hear, before I take up my story, where I left off, and that is, that though both Captain Gordon and my husband are dead, there is still a man living in the regiment who can swear to your having been in the barracks, if that can be of any service to you now, after your punishment is over."

"And who may he be!" exclaimed Seaton, with eager surprise and curiosity.

"James Wilson; who was, at that time, in Captain Gordon's service, and waited on you and his master, at your farewell supper, the very night of the fire. He often told my husband, that it was shameful injustice for you to be transported, for that he could prove you were as innocent as he was, and absent the whole time."

"And has the regiment returned to England?" inquired Grace.

"Some say it is on the way home," answered the widow, "for you see, since I was with it so long, I have a sort of love for it, as if I belonged to it somehow, and always ask about it, where I am likely to hear any news—but I have not been able to learn anything certain."

"This is most important, dearest Grace," said Seaton, whilst an unwonted expression of hope and delight animated his countenance. "Would to Heaven that this man may reach England in safety! Owing to all the confusion and the agitation into which I was thrown by the unexpected accusations brought against me, it never occurred to my memory till now, that a servant had attended on us that evening; and his evidence might be quite as efficient as that of Captain Gordon himself."

"Have I not often told you, Charles, that all would be clear at last?" said

Amy, pressing her brother's hands, in hers, whilst her eyes overflowed with tears of joy.

"Never doubt the justice of Heaven, my dear," said the old woman, looking at the girl with an affectionate smile. "Pretty creature! and so you are Mr. Charles's sister, after all! Well, to be sure—I never thought Miss Seaton would grow up so fair and so handsome, that is the truth. But children change greatly. Aye—aye—now I understand it all; and Miss Grace has done right, as she always does, to stand by you both, and give you all the help she can, whatever her rich relations may say against it."

"But, Molly, you were telling us something about Lucy Forrest, when Mr. Seaton came in," said Miss Dalton, gently interrupting her.

"Yes, yes, sure enough, I was telling you how she set her cap at Mr. Charles, who would have nothing to say to her, whilst Mr. Graves, it was said, slipped

many a guinea into her willing hand. And so now, I will proceed to the history of the fire. As I have told you, I was engaged to be married; and it was settled, between John and myself, that we should be married the morning before the regiment embarked—for he had got leave for me to go with him; and I was engaged as a maid to one of the officer's ladies on board of ship. The day before that fixed for our wedding, I left Mr. Dalton's to go and wish my relations farewell. Mr. Dalton had gone that morning to York; Mr Graves, who had a house of his own, was away all the afternoon somewhere on business; and after the bank was closed, Mr. Seaton was invited to come to the barracks. There was nobody left in Mr. Dalton's dwelling house, which joined the banking office, except myself and Lucy Forrest, with little Miss Dalton, who was then just three years old. I thought it rather odd that Lucy Forrest did all she could to persuade me not to come back to sleep there

that night—for it seemed more natural for her to prefer having somebody with her. In fact, I had my suspicions that all was not quite right, and so I said no more, but resolved, if possible, to return and see what she was about. Moreover, I thought it better to sleep at the bank, that I might be ready early in the morning. So I took the key of the house-door with me without her knowing anything about it. As I had to come several miles out of the country, it was eleven o'clock at night before I got back to the bank. I let myself in, without being observed, by a back door leading through the kitchen. My bed-room was at the top of the house; and, as I went up-stairs, I had to pass the door of the room where Mr. Dalton always slept when at home. It was partly open, and I was surprised to see a light in the room. My suspicions of Lucy Forrest returned, and I drew near very softly, to ascertain what was going on there at such a strange time of night. I was more than ever surprised

when I saw a man stooping down with a great key in his hand, whilst a candle stood near him on the floor."

"In what part of the room?" demanded Seaton, with breathless eagerness.

"In the corner near the fire-place," answered the old woman, nodding her head, as if she perfectly well understood the import of his question.

"Good heaven! he must have been opening the lock of the iron closet in the bank, which Mr. Dalton had constructed to come up into his sleeping room for greater security."

"So it seemed to me," said Molly, "for being the house-maid, I knew very well what was there. He was too busy, at all events, to see, or hear, anything of me."

"But you saw him clearly—distinctly? did you know him?"

"Perfectly," replied the widow; and leaning forward, close to Seaton, she added, in a low voice, "It was James Graves!"

A look of horror and astonishment was exchanged between Seaton and Grace Dalton, as they heard this announcement; but not a word was uttered by either. There was a profound silence for several minutes. It seemed as if a feeling, too intense for expression, filled the hearts of all present.

Old Molly, after smoking quietly a brief space, was the first to speak.

"We all knew," she continued, "that when Mr. Dalton was from home, he never trusted the key of the strong closet to any one but you, Mr. Seaton; and that you always slept in this room during his absence, so I could not tell what to think. I had an idea there was something not right, but I was afraid of being seen, and so I slipped past as gently as I could. When I got to the nursery, I thought I would just go in and tell Lucy that I had come home again. But, wonder upon wonder! I found the room quite empty, and the bed had never been slept in!"

"Merciful heaven! and the child—was Amy Dalton not there?" cried Charles Seaton, grasping the old woman's arm with trembling fingers, whilst he gazed with startling eagerness on her withered face.

The expression of that face spoke far more than words, as she answered,

"No sir! neither Lucy nor the child."

"Yet, Lucy swore upon the trial, that she went to bed there with the child, after seeing me lock myself into Mr. Dalton's room—and that she had been asleep some time, when alarmed by the cry of fire, she sprang up, forgetting the child in her first confusion and terror, she rushed to the stairs, but the bank and all the passages were already in flames. She then tried to return to save the little girl, she said, but it was too late, The staircase was impassable; and when she escaped, with difficulty, over an adjoining roof, she saw the flames bursting from the windows of the nursery."

"God forgive her for perjury," cried old Molly. "Though she was a light creature, I never thought she could be so wicked. But the path of virtue is very narrow, and when a woman once loses it, she soon goes wide astray. I can only say, I never heard, nor saw the least of her, nor the child, that night, though I sat up to pack my clothes for my departure in the morning, and I was still astir when I was frightened by a light shining from the back windows of the bank, on the opposite wall of the yard, and by a strong smell of burning; I was the first to give the alarm of fire—but I saw nothing of Lucy Forrest. I can swear, that when I looked into the nursery on my way down to call her, in case she had returned, neither she, nor the child was there."

"Merciful Heaven! then it is possible that the child did not perish in the flames!" exclaimed Seaton, in an agitated voice.

"Lucy best knows what she did with

it—but that it was not burnt that night in the nursery, I can take my oath," returned Molly, with the most earnest solemnity.

"Oh! had you been here fourteen years ago, how much suffering and disgrace had I been spared," said the convict. "But it is too late now to lament the past; we must strive to profit by this important evidence, for the future."

"But, Molly, why have you never come to tell this to Mr. Dalton, the poor, broken-hearted father?" demanded Miss Dalton, eagerly. "It would have, in some degree, consoled him, and might have diminished his anger against his nephew, whom he has ever regarded as the murderer of his child."

"Where was the use of it, miss?" answered the old woman, with dogged composure. "He never would believe me in former days, when I told him anything about Lucy Forrest's doings with Graves. That fellow is about him as much as ever,

and would soon have persuaded him, once more, that I was a liar; and if he had believed me, what good would that have done, when I could tell him nothing more? I thought as long as Mr. Charles was away, it could help nobody, as most likely the child died long ago."

"Why should you suppose that?" demanded Grace.

"I have made many enquiries since I came home, but I could never learn that any lady had ever seen a child with Lucy Forrest. In truth, so many years have passed over our heads since then, that the whole story is nearly forgotten."

"But Lucy still lives!" returned Seaton. "I have seen her since my return, and if it be possible, she shall be found, and brought to reveal the truth."

The widow shook her head.

"If you can learn the truth from nobody else," she said, "I fear you will never get it out of her."

"It is certain she perjured herself on

my trial," replied Seaton. "But perhaps the motive which induced her may have ceased to exist."

"People all say she has a heavy crime on her conscience, and has become half-mad with remorse," said Miss Dalton. "She is in the greatest poverty, and a wretched outcast of society—kindness may, perhaps, induce her to confess all she formerly concealed."

"Every body said she was Graves's mistress, as I hear," returned Molly. "Most likely she only did his bidding."

"But he has long deserted her," said Grace. "He has left her to sink into the lowest depths of misery and vice, whilst he is profitting by the consequences of her crimes; she may, perhaps, be glad to assist in bringing his villany to light, and thus revenging herself for his cruel neglect."

"We servants always said she was in love with Mr. Charles," returned Molly, "and her vanity certainly made her enraged, that he never even looked at her.

Perhaps before now her heart has softened towards him, and she may repent the ill she did him. But nobody knows where to find her—"

"Yet if she still exists, on the face of the earth, she must be found!" exclaimed Seaton. "Not only to prove my innocence, but to disclose the real fate of my poor uncle's infant. I could support, without repining, all I have endured, if he were convinced, that I am innocent of his child's destruction, and if his old age were yet gladdened by her restoration to his arms."

"Don't hope too fast, nor too much, my dear," said Molly. "You have a cunning one to deal with! and Graves will spare no money, if he learns that you are trying to get evidence in your favour. But what I can do to help you, shall be done. Old Molly is no fool though she wears a woollen skirt, and she has been about in the world, and learnt more than many that have school learning, and she has known you,

and your father and mother before you, from a child, Mr. Charles, and would gladly lay down the little bit of life she has left, to gain you back your honour. So you may trust her!"

"I do trust her with my whole heart," replied Seaton, pressing the old woman's extended hand cordially in his, "and she may count upon my gratitude."

"Leave Lucy Forrest to me," replied the widow, "if you, or Miss Grace, were to make enquiries for her, perhaps it might get to wrong ears, and put people on their guard, but nobody knows a word of all that I have told you to-night, and nobody suspects me. I can do what I please, and go where I please; but as soon as I learn anything, you shall hear it. Miss Grace knows where I live, and can send for me, if you want me, and so I won't keep you any longer now, for no doubt you have plenty to say to one another. God bless you both my dears, and may you yet see happier days."

So saying, the old woman arose, and after giving her hand to all present, she turned to depart. It was in vain, that Grace offered her both refreshment and money. She would accept of nothing. She wanted for nothing, she said, it was not for that she came there, and wishing them all a good evening, she departed.

CHAPTER VI

See yonder poor o'er labour'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn.

BURNS.

MANY circumstances contributed to render that a happy evening to the little party she had left behind her. Grace joyfully related to Charles the discovery of the lost sovereigns, which he heard with astonishment and delight. The innocent hearted Amy no longer felt a doubt, that her

brother's innocence would ere long be fully established, and the hopes which had that day been excited in the hearts of the lovers, were doubly cheering to them both, as for the first time after their long separation and suffering, they enjoyed the happiness of unconstrained discourse, and the full assurance of their mutual and undiminished love. There were moments, when both of them felt that the present so nearly resembled the illusion of a dream, that as they gazed silently on each other, they could hardly believe in the reality of their reunion. All the sorrow of the past, almost their hopes for the future, were forgotten in their present happiness, and Mr. Graves, who was at that hour doing the honours of one of his splendid dinners, to a very select party, with a heart full of cares and anxieties, might well have been envious, had he known the innocent gaiety, which enlivened Grace Dalton's tea table. Good Mr. Barnes came also unexpectedly, to join thier happy party. At first the worthy

man was a little constrained, at feeling himself the visitor of an unmarried lady, but he tranquillized himself, by the recollection, that the neighbours could not possibly make any observations, it being perfectly dark when he knocked at the door.

"There can be no impropriety in my visit, I hope, you think, Miss Grace," he said, "there being two of you, makes the greatest difference in the world; and then Mr. Charles is here, so there can be nothing particular in my coming to tea. Only, perhaps, the people of the house may think it strange."

"Not in the least, my dear sir," said Miss Dalton, kindly. "They know you are my uncle's man of business, so there are a hundred reasons why you could visit me with the greatest propriety, even though, unluckily, neither of us has the good fortune to be married. So pray have no anxiety on that score —make yourself quite at home, and allow me to give you a

cup of tea. We are all delighted to see you."

"Much obliged to you, Miss Grace, you are very kind," he said, "but matters cannot long go on in this way. We must see what can be done to get things a little strait. Poor Mr. Dalton must have you back again, and Mr. Charles into the bargain. Eh!

'Hope told a flattering tale,'

Mr. Seaton. By the bye, I have begun to practise that old piece over; some evening soon, we will try it once more together. Happy days, Mr. Charles. Those were happy days—youth, and all that. But though age is coming on—fingers stiff—yet let us keep a good heart, and

'Away with melancholy.'

Old strains bring back old times. Dull

work at old Vernon's, eh, Mr. Charles. A little fiddling will be a refreshment to us both, after a long day's work."

"I fear," replied Seaton, "I have forgotten the little I ever knew of music."

"Ay, to be sure, fourteen years is time enough to forget a great deal," answered Mr. Barnes; "but I have never practised all that time, either, and, 'pon honour, I was quite astonished at myself, last evening," and putting his hand up, and his head on one side, as if in the act of playing the violin, Mr. Barnes ran up the gamut with his fingers, and his voice, with all the lightness and agility of a young performer. "But, by the bye, Miss Grace," he cried, suddenly interrupting himself, and looking exceedingly serious, "I hope you are not going to have anything to do with this ridiculous concern of a bazaar, which Mrs. Graves is making herself so busy about. It is all a humbug, depend upon it."

"Certainly, I shall have nothing to do with it," answered the lady. "There are

sufferers enough, morally and physically, at our very doors, and my duties at home are of too decided and imperative a character, for me to waste my sympathies, or my money, on the Princesses of Ethiopia."

"Right, my dear ma'am, perfectly right," cried Mr. Barnes, rubbing his hands with exultation. "It is really extraordinary, how our thoughts coincide! But I suspect," he added, with a very cunning smile, "that Ethiopia has very little to do with this matter. The money will never go out of England, depend upon it. Mr. Black, the missionary, will take very good care of that. It is very possible the ladies in Africa may be very great sinners, but if vanity and extravagance are sins, the patronesses of the bazaar had better begin their christian lessons nearer home. I suspect Mrs. Graves, for one, will find, before long, she might have employed her money better."

"Do you suppose that there is any

danger of embarrassments in that quarter ?" inquired Seaton. "I thought, from all I had heard, that the banker's wealth was perfectly incalculable."

"At one time it was supposed so," answered Mr. Barnes. "All things seemed to prosper which he undertook, and every one had confidence in him except myself, and one, or two others, who naturally could not venture to impugn his credit. But his high style of living first excited mistrust, amongst those who remembered his origin. Then his wife's impertinence and pretensions made them both enemies; and now, I presume you know, that after having been at an enormous expence, he is declared unduly elected for the borough, and guilty of bribery and corruption. This has made people look sharp about them; the iron trade, in which he has largely engaged, has been a very losing business for the last year; his boundless speculations in railroads are supposed to have taken an unpleasant turn, and in short, very dis-

agreeable reports are getting into circulation."

"Anything about the robbery of the bank?" demanded Grace, eagerly.

"Not exactly that," returned Mr. Barnes. "Matters of business—recent business—abuse of trust—hem—I cannot say more Miss Grace, it would not be right, till things are proved, but it seems very certain, that Mr. Graves is greatly straitened for cash, and I have no doubt he will try to get what he can out of your uncle. It is a thousand pities you were obliged to leave him, at such a critical moment. Who knows what may happen."

"I don't fear his influence with my uncle in the least," replied Miss Dalton.

"Well, I hope he won't get money from him under false pretences, but it is commonly believed, that he is in great want of it, and by no means scrupulous how he obtains it. You must understand, that is rather an awkward situation for a man of business in England. Once prove that

he has been guilty of shabby tricks, and he is done ma'am, done upon 'change. Not an honest man, nor one who wished to be thought so, would speak to him. Credit, miss—credit is all things in business, and Mr. Graves's credit is tottering."

"There is no doubt that something must be wrong, when so many of his people are out of work," answered Grace.

"And those who are at work are discontented, ma'am; and they have very good reason to be so. They are ground to powder, half-starved, and expected to work as hard as ever, on half the wages; and the business has been a capital business, from which Mr. Graves has drawn enormous profits, whilst he only paid his workmen just enough to live upon, and now when trade is less flourishing, they have not half enough, and they know that the produce of their labour, has been squandered on railway speculations, and gambling of every description, to gratify the avarice and extravagance, of a fellow

like Graves, whom they cannot even respect as an honest man. I beg your pardon, Miss Grace—I am warm, perhaps too warm, but I cannot help it, when I see so many industrious men and their families, dependent on the caprice of a bad master."

"I respect and share in your feelings," was the lady's reply, "and Mr. Dalton has done everything in his power, to persuade Mr. Graves of the extreme impolicy of his conduct; but he imagines he understands his own interest better than any one else, and will pursue his own course, till the storm breaks unexpectedly around him, and sweeps away all the fabric of pride he has been employed for long years in erecting, at a disregarded but measureless expence of human suffering."

"It would be better if many would take an example from Mr. Dalton, Miss Grace," rejoined the good man, warmly; "there is a master for whom his workmen work with pleasure, nay, I may say, would be ready to lay down their lives, for they know he

takes as much care for them, as for himself, and they respect his knowledge, and they love his goodness, and they all look up to him, as to a really superior being to themselves; but one, whose superiority they do not envy, because it is only exerted for the benefit of his fellow creatures."

"There are very unpleasant murmurs in circulation amongst the workmen," rejoined Seaton, after listening with the greatest attention to the foregoing conversation. "In my endeavours to obtain work, I have had occasion to see and hear a great deal that is going on in the under currents of society, of which the upper classes know nothing."

"Free trade, sir,—free trade—and railroads, and all the other associations which have taken the place of the old monopolies, are doing wonders," returned Mr. Barnes. "And the press, sir. It was very different when I was a boy. There are penny pamphlets sold by the hundreds on market days, sir, about religion and philosophy,

and things that are far too deep for me; but the workmen read them, sir, they subscribe to buy them, and circulate them amongst each other. There are very clever fellows amongst these men, sir, depend upon it."

"We must count upon such clear-headed, practical fellows, for keeping up the honour of old England, and saving her from the ill consequences of luxury and bigotry of every denomination," said Seaton.

"I have seen several of these works of which Mr. Barnes speaks," rejoined Grace, "many of them contain the highest and purest religious principles. They are not infidel declamations, but teach men to think and reason for themselves, instead of believing on trust, what they do not understand."

"Many people say it is dangerous for such persons to think," said Mr. Barnes. "But I cannot see why, if God has given a man brains he cannot think quite as justly with an empty pocket as a full one."

"In former days," rejoined Seaton, "nobody was allowed to think, who had not a mitre upon his head, or a sword in his hand, and such men only uttered such truths, as suited their own interest. Truth, they said then, and many still say now, might endanger existing institutions; but if existing institutions are founded on falsehood, and are not beneficial to all classes, the sooner they are changed the better."

"Quite of your opinion, Mr. Seaton," said Mr. Barnes, with a most sagacious nod; "and there are many wiser heads than mine, which think the same. Institutions must be suited to the times, and the people's wants. The poor understood nothing of all this when I was a boy, but it is very different now. People thought of nothing but war then—fine days for the contractors, but now everybody is thinking of getting forward."

"Twenty years ago," answered Seaton, "such of the poor as could read, seldom

could get any other book than the bible and such little tracts, as were distributed by pious ladies and gentlemen, which taught them, that they must be contented to be half famished, till they went to Heaven, and that to be sure of happiness in the next world, they must be very submissive to their superiors in this; that they must consider the squire and the clergyman as possessing a sort of divine right to their admiration and gratitude for a dose of physic now and then, and a shilling on very extraordinary occasions. But though a pious baronet has asserted in the House of Commons, that the education of the poor ought to go no further than to assure their salvation in the next world, instead of contributing to the amelioration of their physical condition in this, and everything has been done by clerical influence to restrain it within such limits, the people themselves are now fully awake to their real interests in the great question of

national education. With the progress of the people the institutions of every country must be changed."

"And they are changing every day, sir, quietly and wisely in old England," said Mr. Barnes. "Civilised men can surely improve their condition without perpetual bloodshed and revolutions. Only think how many public changes have been made in our time, Mr. Charles."

"All of which have improved the condition of the country," rejoined Seaton, "although we had for long been told, before they were obtained, that they would infallibly prove its destruction."

"No, no! my dear sir, it is better to hope than to fear. Fear never gained a battle in the whole course of the world's history. 'Hope told a flattering tale,' is my motto, and a very good motto, as long as we are on this side of the grave. But tell me, Mr. Charles, how is your own private business going on. Have you made any further discoveries? eh, sir Have you

got on the track of the real thief after all?"

"I tell you frankly, I have received some information, which promises to throw a light upon the past," answered the convict. "But I must, for the present, be silent, Mr. Barnes. You, who are a man of business, very well know, that great prudence is necessary, in such an affair."

"Quite right, quite right," answered the worthy man; "I will not ask you one word more, and, perhaps, my dear sir, we had better be turning our steps homeward. Ten o'clock—must be up at work by times; always do a little in the garden, Miss Grace, before I go to the office. Keeps me in health, ma'am. Can I do anything for you at Linton, I am going to drive over there, on a little business, in a day or two."

"I will send you a parcel for uncle Philip," she replied; "and tell him we are all going on well, and hope soon to see him."

"Certainly, Miss Grace," he replied, and then wishing the ladies a good night, the worthy clerk departed, accompanied by Charles Seaton, who promised to return the following evening.

When Grace retired that night to her chamber, she remained long quietly sitting at her window, looking out upon the moonshine, though scarcely conscious of its light. The day had been one remarkable for strange discoveries, and extraordinary excitement; a day, the events of which would probably have a lasting influence on her own destiny, and that of those most dear to her. Under her usual tranquillity of manner, wild and hurried feelings had long agitated her heart. Her position had been suddenly entirely changed—a new future had been opened before her, so different from all she had for many years anticipated, that she was, at first, scarcely able to comprehend the reality of all that had occurred, and lingering fears, had mingled with her hopes. But the events

of that day inspired her with the happiest confidence, that all her long cherished wishes would yet be accomplished. The residence of Seaton in her neighbourhood, and their daily interviews, had lately given a new excitement to her life; in his presence it was no longer merely the hope, but actual happiness which she had that day enjoyed, and long her fancy dwelt with delight upon his every look and tone. She enjoyed, for the first time, since his misfortunes, the quiet luxury of happy thoughts; thoughts, wandering, and flitting, and undefined, as the light clouds that floated over the moon, above her head, and, like them, deriving all their brightness from the object round which they hovered. For her thoughts were of him she loved.

One of her greatest causes of anxiety and suffering, during their long separation, had been, that even though perchance they might meet again, the companion of her youth, the object of her early affection,

was lost to her for ever, and that hardened or degraded by his early and unjust sufferings, the fine qualities of his mind, the pure unselfishness and generosity of his loving heart, might have been corrupted and perverted to evil. This terror had caused her many tears, and often had she poured forth her supplications to Heaven, that rather than behold this ruin of a noble nature, in love of which her young soul had felt exalted and purified, as by a communion with a superior being—rather than witness the degradation of him whose virtues had been the treasure of her memory, she might be spared, even by death, from the agony of such a re-union.

And that night she fell on her knees, to return thanks, that this exceeding fear, which she had confessed alone to Heaven, had been for ever annihilated.

Charles Seaton was changed, it was true; but all she had loved in the youth had become in the man, more firm, more noble, and more exalted. His

thoughts had ripened to the capability of decided and energetic action. Grace felt that the object of her love was no longer a dreamy remembrance, but a reality, which must, for the future, engross and master her whole thoughts and existence. She felt that Charles Seaton was a being whom a woman must be proud to love and to reverence, and overpowered by this conviction, she gave up her whole imagination to anticipations of happiness, in a union with such a man, to whom early sympathy and misfortunes had long united her by the tenderest ties of affection.

CHAPTER VII.

For highest looks have not the highest mind,
Nor haughty words most full of highest thoughts,
But are like bladders blowen up with wind.

SPENSER.

THE situation of Mr. Graves was, at this time, as Mr. Barnes had described it, by no means enviable. Disappointed in his expectations of obtaining a seat in Parliament, he was burthened with all the expences of an election, not only without any of the advantages he had anticipated from success, but with the consciousness, even callous as he was, that his reputation

was considerably compromised by the dishonourable intrigues and corruption, of which the examination before the committee had proved him guilty. His iron-trade, as we have before said, was in a depressed state, and his responsibilities in various railway concerns made daily demands upon his purse. He well knew, that if he once failed to pay up these speculating engagements, his credit was blasted for ever, and by great efforts, he had hitherto succeeded in doing so. But to answer these sudden calls on his purse, he had incurred such enormous risks, that unless some of his speculations took, suddenly, a favourable turn, a speedy ruin, and the most dishonourable exposures, awaited him. Though not a vicious man, he had been, from youth, an unprincipled one. Ambition, which he had found no other means of contenting, than by making money, which he flattered himself would suffice to obtain for him the elevated station and influence he covetted in society, had first

led him to resort to dishonest means in order to make a fortune quickly.

His plausible manner had favoured his deceits ; and long unsuspected, he advanced gradually from little trickeries to the commission of absolute crimes, till, by degrees, all reproaches of conscience, and almost all fear of detection, were lost in the pride of success. For many years he had been fortunate in all his speculations—he appeared, and he flattered himself that he had really become, a very great man. He was so—at all events in his own estimation. He thought himself superior in cunning to all the rest of the world—and as cunning was the only virtue he esteemed worth possessing, he despised all those who were without it.

Some are of opinion, that there is a moral retribution on earth, and that the acts of men are punished, or rewarded, even during life, by their own inevitable consequences. But Mr. Graves concerned himself about that not at all. He was

totally unconcerned about general principles. He was a man of expediency. Prosperity had made him sanguine, and when one affair went wrong, he trusted that another would succeed better, and speedily set all to rights again.

Though every shilling was of consequence to him, after he had been disappointed of a loan from Mr. Dalton, he did not reduce his visible expenditure, for he knew that to maintain his credit, it was absolutely necessary to keep up appearances to the world, and though he was provoked beyond measure by his wife's extravagance, he dared not tell her what important reasons he had for requiring her to economise. Neither love, nor confidence, existed between them.

He lived with her on decent terms, because she was Mr. Dalton's niece; and he hoped now Grace had quitted her uncle's house, that she would be his principal heir. Martha, on her side, treated him with civility—fully aware, that

that to maintain her position in society, it was necessary that they should appear to live on good terms together. She supposed he was rich, and never troubled herself to enquire further into the state of his affairs, as long as she had plenty of money to spend.

After Mr. Graves's parliamentary disappointment, she, for the first time, found difficulty in obtaining this; and, at every fresh demand she made upon her husband's purse, she received upbraidings and bitter reproofs for her extravagance. But she was too much accustomed to self-indulgence, and too spoilt by luxury, to impose any restraint upon her caprices, or her wishes, in consequence of her husband's objections. The only difference was, that instead of paying her tradesmen regularly, as she had hitherto done, she contracted debts to a very considerable amount, feeling with a sort of saucy satisfaction, that Mr. Graves, in spite of his parsimonious ill-

humour, would be obliged to pay them at last.

With this tranquillizing conviction, she made superb preparations for her stall at the fancy bazaar. She was, however, considerably alarmed, when her bills came in, to find they amounted to above a hundred pounds. Martha, though not easily dismayed by difficultics, had learnt, by recent experience, that it would be impossible to obtain such a sum from her husband, without a scene, which she shrunk from encountering. Some expedient, therefore, must be found, for avoiding the disclosure of her extravagance, and she tormented herself the whole of the following night, in devising a means, by which the brilliance of her appearance at the bazaar, might be attended with as little expense as possible. A happy idea, at length, occurred to her, and on the following morning she lost no time in putting her plan in execution Immediately after breakfast she sent a

note to the Reverend Mr. Black, the patron and originator of the mission to Ethiopia, politely requesting him to wait upon her in the course of the morning, as serious scruples had occurred to her mind, as to the propriety of her taking a part in the proposed sale of ladies' work.

She well knew that too short a time remained, before the day of sale, for any other lady to be found to replace her, and her promised contributions, and Mr. Black was as well aware of this as herself. He knew also that a sort of rivalry existed between Mrs. Graves and Lady Giles, as to the brilliance of their respective stalls, and the dignity of Lady President, and he had no doubt, that in the hope of eclipsing each other the contributions of both would be greatly increased to his ultimate profit. It was impossible therefore for him to read the note of the banker's lady without infinite dismay, and immediately seizing his hand and cane, he hurried off without delay, in obedience to her summons.

Sundry maledictions against female folly and caprice were muttered by the worthy man, as he pursued his way, but he was all smiles and complaisance, when he entered the boudoir of Mrs. Graves.

Mr. Black was a very good looking, plausible man, who could flatter as adroitly by glances as by words, and knew so admirably well, how to adapt his manners, and his language, to the persons whom he addressed, that he had very rarely reason to doubt the power of his influence over the female sex. But that morning he was put to fault.

All his well-arranged compliments about disinterested piety, christian love, and a pious interest in the welfare of the Ethiopian Princesses fell without effect on the obtuse ears of the impracticable Mrs. Graves.

She had an answer for every observation, an excuse to meet every request.

"Her husband," she said, "did not like her making such a public appearance, and

really, as the day approached, she had lost the courage to stand to be stared at, by the whole town and country. She began to wonder, how clergymen could give their sanction to such a sort of female exhibition, which, to say the least of it, could hardly be considered in harmony with the doctrines of St. Paul, as to female modesty and propriety.

Mr. Black begged to assure her, in reply, that she had quite mistaken the doctrine of St. Paul on this subject, which certainly he and others of his learned brethren might be supposed capable of properly interpeting. That there could be no sin in charity, when undertaken for a pious motive, though a slight sacrifice of feeling might be necessitated for its accomplishment, and for his part, he saw no greater immodesty in a lady sitting behind a stall at a bazaa, than in her pew at church."

Mrs. Graves replied, that all that was a matter of feeling. It might be very well

for the young, and the handsome, but that day was gone by with her.

Mr. Black was all astonishment, and adroitly insinuated, that Mrs. Graves was generally acknowledged to be one of the beauties of the town, and was never lovelier than at present.

The lady had never doubted this to be the fact, so was not at all flattered by the compliment, and persisted in her determination to withdraw her name, and also her contributions from the fancy fair. She was really tired of the whole thing, she added, and as her husband disapproved of it, she could not help having some scruples of conscience about appearing.

Mr. Black promised to speak to Mr. Graves himself, upon the subject, when he felt sure he should immediately overcome his objections. He then left piety, and propriety, and charity, out of the question, and spoke very eloquently about the fashion of the thing; of the brilliant company

that was expected, and the attractions which Mrs. Graves would add by her presence, to the chosen few who would officiate in the sale room.

But the lady was inexorable, and Mr. Black was for once completely puzzled. He did not believe her excuses. He saw there was some mystery at the bottom of Mrs. Graves's sudden and obstinate secession from his band of fair and obedient followers, but be her secret impulse what it might, he fully resolved, not to resign without a struggle, her valuable contributions, which he well knew were all in readiness.

"But if Mrs. Graves has scruples as to appearing in company with other distinguished ladies of the neighbourhood," he said, "at a sale patronized by royalty, directed by a clergyman, and for the benefit of a charitable and pious mission, far be it from me to endeavour to persuade her to act against the dictates of her conscience. I respect her delicacy of feeling and firm-

ness of principle, and will endeavour to find some other lady to supply her place, inadequately, no doubt; and I will myself take charge of the beautiful works, which she has been kind enough to prepare, and see that they are disposed of to the best possible advantage."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Black, but if I do not attend myself I can send no contribution," answered the lady, with considerable warmth.

"I am astonished--dismayed, madam, by what I hear." replied Mr. Black, with unfeigned consternation. "After all your promises—your desire to be appointed Lady President—your sudden change of conduct is utterly incomprehensible!"

"But I have not been appointed President," replied Mrs. Graves, with indignation, which she endeavoured to conceal under a scornful laugh. "And if Lady Giles has the honour, she may bear the expense. I have no idea of throwing away a hundred pounds for such a trumpery con-

cern, when there are so many of my husband's famished workmen, whom I am obliged daily to relieve; and what is more, I cannot do it, and I will not do it."

"I regret exceedingly," said Mr. Black, hoping he had now discovered the point where the storm had gathered, "I am truly distressed, that Lady Giles's position as Mayoress compelled us to appoint her President. It was decidedly my desire that a lady so distinguished by personal attractions and manners as yourself, should give an *éclat* to our bazaar by appearing as its President; and had I been aware that you really considered the appointment as a compliment, I would have incurred the opposition of all the rest of the committee, and insisted on your nomination. And even now, my dear Mrs. Graves, I feel sure the matter may be arranged to your satisfaction—we can have two Lady Presidents!"

"And do you really expect to catch my

hundred pounds by such a paltry expedient? no, sir, I scorn divided honours," exclaimed Martha, whose vulgarity was now no longer under controul. "I am not such a fool as you take me for, and if you have no better plan to propose, I withdraw, and there is an end of it. If I had known before hand what Lady Carlton, and such leaders of fashion, really thought of the affair, I never would have had anything to do with it, I can promise you!"

"Excuse me, my dear madam," replied the gentleman, "but I am sure your own sense and judgment are too admirable for you to be influenced by the opinion of mere worldly characters however high their rank. The truly pious must be prepared to support the sneers of the ungodly, with cheerful resignation, and to fulfil their appointed task with unyielding resolution. We cannot lose you valuable assistance, my dear madam! for my part I would propose anything I thought likely to give you satis-

tion, and I am sure, any wish of yours would be immediately complied with, by the committee."

"Then I candidly tell you, Mr. Black, I cannot afford the expense," returned the lady, "my husband will be furious when he knows how much I have spent, and if I consent to take a place in your Bazaar, I must have back a part of the cost of the materials of my works, for the benefit of our own poor, starving workmen, whom it is my first duty to relieve."

"I understand you, now, madam, perfectly," answered Mr. Black, clearing his throat in a very significant manner. "It might have been quite as well had you told me this at first; for you could not doubt I would respect your scruples. Your own poor have, no doubt, the first claim upon your charity and generosity. I presume, after your expenses are paid by the sale of your works, you are willing that the surplus should go to the benefit of the mission."

"Exactly so," said Mrs. Graves. "After my receipts amount to sixty pounds, I leave the rest at your disposal."

"Umph," returned Mr. Black, who was an exceedingly cautious man of business, "will you kindly allow me to see your proposed contributions?"

"With pleasure," answered Martha, and she conducted Mr. Black into an inner apartment, where the tables and chairs, and even the floor, were covered with piles of such useless trumpery, as constitutes the usual staple commodities of fancy fairs.

The gentleman surveyed the collection with a practised eye; and convinced that the articles were likely to be saleable, rather than of their real value, he agreed, without further hesitation, to the terms proposed by Mrs. Graves, on condition that this arrangement must be kept a profound secret, lest other ladies might assert their right to similar conditions.

As both parties had an interest in con-

cealing the truth, there appeared little doubt that their compact would be strictly observed; and Martha Graves was highly delighted at the success of an expedient, which allowed her to appear publicly, in very fine clothes; to outshine and eclipse Lady Giles by her beauty and fashion, if not as Lady President, and to make a great show of charity and generosity, at very small expense.

Mr. Black, though considerably annoyed by the diminution of his anticipated profits, proceeded, nevertheless, to announce his sale, by various cards and advertisements, for the middle of the race week. *Dio Volente!*

But though this affair was so easily arranged to Mrs. Graves's satisfaction, there were many others, over which it was impossible for her to exert a similar controul.

One extravagance begot another, and one concealment made another necessary. She consoled herself with the idea that her

husband must pay her debts as long as old Dalton lived, to keep up appearances, and at all events, when the old man died, she should certainly get a handsome legacy, and that would put matters all to rights again. It would be a ridiculous thing for her and Mr. Graves to think of saving when they had no children, and so she resolved to enjoy herself as much, and as long, as she could, let the consequences be what they might. Her satisfaction was at the highest point when a box arrived that evening containing the dresses she had ordered, from London, for the race ball and the bazaar; and every care was forgotten, as she repeatedly admired herself before the mirror, in an exquisite lace bonnet, trimmed with blush roses and ostrich features. She never considered that a dress, suitable for a young and elegant girl, might, possibly, be somewhat too juvenile for the portly and florid Martha Graves, at seven-and-thirty.

CHAPTER VIII.

We know the arduous strife, the eternal laws,
To which the triumph of all good is given
High sacrifice and labour without pause.

WORDSWORTH.

CHARLES SEATON thought it is duty to communicate to Mr. Vernon, James Carr's discovery of the lost sovereigns, and he was not a little surprised to find that gentleman as well acquainted with the fact as himself. Calm in innocence, he did not even observe the sharp glance with which the lawyer regarded him during his disclosures; for it never occurred to his mind that he, penniless as he was, could be sus-

pected of having sent this money into circulation, and his unembarrassed behaviour in consequence, sufficed to obliterate every shadow of doubt as to his innocence, from the mind of the solicitor, and when Seaton had repeated to him the narrative of old Molly, he felt that his suspicions as to the real criminal were entirely confirmed. Mr. Vernon was well aware that the convict had always asserted that the testimony of Captain Gordon would have sufficed to establish his innocence, and he now rejoiced to hear, that though that gentleman had long been laid in the grave, another witness was probably still living, who could give an equally valuable evidence in his favour.

Referring to a file of old newspapers, he found that Molly's old regiment had actually sailed from Calcutta on its return to England, a considerable time before, so that if not yet actually arrived, it might be daily expected.

Mr. Vernon trusted, he said, that the important witness, of whom Molly had spoken,

might live to reach his native country, and that, in the meantime, they must endeavour to strengthen their case, by as much corroborative evidence as possible. What most astonished him in the old woman's story, was her assertion, that Mr. Dalton's little girl had positively not perished, as had been supposed, in the conflagration of the Bank. No one had previously had the slightest suspicion that the child had survived that awful night. He rejoiced at the discovery of this fact, not only on Seaton's account, but for the sake of his old friend, although at the same time, he felt some apprehensions that were the girl still living, her recovery might, under many circumstances, afford little comfort to her long bereft father, as it was more than probable her education had been entirely neglected.

Both Seaton and Mr. Vernon were of opinion that as no one but Lucy Forrest could elucidate the mysterious fate of the unfortunate child, it was absolutely neces-

sary, on this account alone, to make the most diligent and speedy search for her. The promises of old Molly to undertake the task did not content the lawyer; who said, that as a man of business, he must also employ other means, to discover if the wretched creature was still in existence, though with extreme caution, so as not to excite the suspicions of any other party, who might have been concerned in this affair.

Warmly did the good man press Seaton by the hand, before he left him to his daily task, and for the first time he spoke openly and sanguinely of the future which awaited him.

"Patience, patience, Mr. Seaton, only a little while longer, and I trust all your trials will be over, and you will be replaced in the honourable position in society, of which you have for long been so unjustly deprived. But why should I talk of patience to you, who have supported your misfortunes with such noble firmness and forbearance. We

children of good fortune, may bow our heads ashamed, before your moral courage, when we pronounce the word patience. But Providence is ever just in the end. The real criminal will yet be punished."

"I have never coveted revenge," answered Seaton, "even if my ruin was the work of intentioual malignity. I have only suffered with fortitude, because I trusted I might be spared, after the period of my banishment had expired, to prove that I was fully and entirely innocent of all the alleged crimes, for which I had been unjustly punished."

"You are a noble fellow," answered the worthy solicitor, with most unusual warmth, "and I rejoice that my son has proved his clear judgment and discrimination of character, by being your friend in adversity. So now to work, for I have no time to remain longer with you at present. I must talk to you again this evening."

So saying, Mr. Vernon once more left Charles Seaton alone in the dull, dusty, little

chamber, in which he had already toiled for many long and weary hours, when his heart, though soothed by the assurance of Grace Dalton's love, was yet distracted by many anxious hopes and fears for the future. But now, it appeared as if the freshness of spring had returned, after a cold and chilling winter, to awaken him to renewed life and joy. His heart once more beat with the proud consciousness that, before long, all men would be compelled to acknowledge that his honor and his honesty were without stain; that, before long, he might venture to claim the hand of Grace Dalton from her uncle himself; and that she, who had clung with unchanging affection to his memory, when all others turned away from him with scorn and contempt, might yet be proud of her fidelity to the convict, and be rewarded as his honoured wife, by his devoted gratitude and love.

But such thoughts were too full of rapture to be long indulged. He felt that, as

he had had patience in affliction, he must also await with patience, the full assurance of his altered fortune, and toil on, as he had long done, to gain his daily bread. Dreams would not assist him; and he was so accustomed to self-government, that only a short time elapsed after the departure of Mr. Vernon, before he was sitting as calmly as usual before his desk, looking over a bundle of accounts and bills, which it was his business to arrange.

He had been engaged in this way nearly two hours, when he was interrupted by a knock at his room door. The same tall man in black, who had received him the first day he called on the solicitor, almost immediately afterwards entered with a cringing servility of manner, very different from the former reception he had given him.

He saw that the unknown writer was treated by his master with particular attention, and enjoyed peculiar privileges; and though he was secretly somewhat jealous thereof, he knew that he could find no redress, and

being of a meek, submissive, servile nature, he sought to conceal this feeling under extraordinary politeness. He could not by any means discover who Mr. Seaton was, and from whence he came. The fact of his living with Mr. Barnes, rendered it impossible for him to obtain any information, from maid-servants and land-ladies, and every day his curiosity became more and more excited. He was now delighted to be the bearer of a message to him, in hopes of making some discovery, however small, in consequence.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but there is a person waiting without, who desires to speak with you; at least, I suppose he meant you, though he only asked to see the new clerk. No name, sir—I beg your pardon, but I should have been no wiser if he had asked for you by name—for though I think I heard it mentioned the first day Mr. Vernon commissioned me to receive you, it escaped my memory, and I

have never heard it since," and he hemmed very significantly.

But Seaton did not appear to understand more than the beginning of his speech, and merely inquired who was the person who wished to speak with him.

"Upon my word I don't know, sir," was the reply, "but he appears in a great hurry, and said he desired to see you immediately on business of great importance, from Miss Dalton."

"Is it possible! Why did you not tell me this at once?" exclaimed Charles, springing hastily from his seat, and flinging away his pen, he hurried past the dismayed clerk into the adjoining passage.

The person who there awaited him, was James Carr; who, well aware, who he was to seek at Mr. Vernon's, had been instructed by Grace, not to show any sign of pleasure at seeing Mr. Seaton for the first time; if possible, not to mention his name, and to meet him as an entire stranger. The good fellow, therefore, mastered his

feelings, and merely touching his hat, told Charles that Miss Dalton would be glad to speak to him immediately, on business of importance. Seaton was greatly surprised and agitated, but told Mr. Smith, the clerk, to make his excuses for his unusual absence, to Mr. Vernon, and to inform him whither he was gone. He then hastily locked up the papers intrusted to him, and requesting Carr to accompany him, they left the house together. They were no sooner in the street, than he hastily interrupted the poor workman in his expressions of pleasure at seeing him again, by inquiring, with great anxiety, if he knew why Miss Dalton had sent in search of him.

"Both she and Miss Amy are quite well, sir, so don't be uneasy," was his reply; "but Mr. Philip Seaton has just come in from the country, and he has brought some news, which he and Miss Grace wish to tell you immediately."

"You don't know to what it relates?"

"No, sir. I happened to be at Miss

Grace's lodging, with a message from Mr. Dalton, to enquire after her health, and so she sent me to bring you."

"You surprise me," returned Seaton. "You have seen Mr. Dalton then, lately?"

"Oh yes, Mr. Charles, I see him every day; now there are so many people ill of the fever, he comes down regularly, to learn if any good can be done, God bless him. Oh, sir, what a burning shame it was, that people parted you and him, by such terrible falsehoods; but they will be no better for it in the end, though now they have got Miss Grace out of the house, they are in hopes they have matters all their own way. But they are quite wrong, I can tell them! The poor old gentleman is nearly broken-hearted for the loss of his niece."

"I believe it, James," said Seaton, gravely.

"But he knows you are come back again, sir," pursued Carr; "and it seems as if his mind had taken a turn from his

old silent grief. He has always been kind to me, for I have served him from a boy; but I was surprised the other day, when he asked me, quite openly and frankly, 'if I had seen you since you came back? if I knew what you were doing? if you had employment, or if you were very poor?' and so forth!"

"And what did you answer?" asked Seaton, eagerly.

"I told him, I believed you had been without employment, and very poor, till Miss Grace had found you and your young sister; but that now she had taken Miss Amy to live with her, and you worked in an office."

"And did he ask nothing about Amy?"

"Yes, sir! he said, he was glad to hear the poor girl would receive some proper instruction at last, for she was, at all events, innocent, and that Miss Grace had a noble heart, and always did what was right. It was a shameful thing of the Graveses to send the motherless child out

to the Colony, where she might have been ruined. I told him, she appeared to have been very well brought up, and was a sweet, kind-hearted young lady, who seemed to take as much pleasure in doing good, as Miss Grace herself; and was a great help to her now, when there were so many poor people in distress. Good gentleman, he seemed to like to listen to me, and he muttered to himself—'Yes, Grace has done right, very right;' and he sent me, the first thing this morning, to enquire after her."

"I rejoice to hear it," said Seaton, earnestly; "for it grieved me greatly, to think I had been the cause of separation and misunderstanding, between Miss Dalton and her uncle."

"It will all come round right, at last, sir," said Carr, "my wife has often said it, when you were far away over the wide seas."

As he thus spoke, they turned into the

street, where Miss Dalton now resided, and the first object they beheld, was uncle Philip standing before her door, most anxiously awaiting them.

"Come in, Charles! come in, my boy. I have capital news for you," cried the old gentleman, as soon as they were within hearing, and having heartily shaken him by the hand, he almost pushed him into the house door.

"I have caught a fish, at last," he said, rubbing his hands with ungovernable exultation, as he followed his nephew upstairs to the drawing-room, where Grace and Amy were impatiently awaiting him. The right fish, my boy! trust an old angler for that; and so I set off at four o'clock this morning to bring the news myself."

"What does all this mean!" enquired Charles, as soon as he had returned the greetings of his cousin and his sister.

"Don't ask them—ask me, boy! have

I not come all the way on purpose—and have I not always told you, that just are the ways of Providence, even upon earth!"

"Well, sir, but Charles is anxious to hear all," interposed Grace, who saw that the feeble mind of the kind old man, was somewhat bewildered by his excitement and unwonted pleasure.

"Hear, yes, to be sure, he shall hear; and other people shall hear too, to whom the news will be less agreeable. They despise poor uncle Philip for a fool; but, as I told Graves once, fools can, sometimes, see farther than wise men give them credit for. A gnat can sting on a summer's evening. But I must tell you, my boy, I forgot—you have not heard yet, what has happened."

"I would very gladly know," said Seaton, with ill-constrained impatience, whilst Grace and Amy smiled, but would not deprive the good old gentleman of the pleasure of telling his own story.

"Well then," he continued, "I was over-

whelmed with astonishment, when the confounded postman asked so much for the letter! At first, I would not take it in, but he over-persuaded me, and, I must say, I have had no reason to repent it. Such news, Charles, so unexpected, so welcome, just at present! I could not help crying like a child, as I read the letter; and I slipped a shilling into the postman's hand, when I had done."

"To what does all this relate?" demanded Seaton, turning in despair and perplexity to his cousin.

"Have I not told you?" returned uncle Philip, impatiently. "It was about our long forgotten cousin Philip Seaton, who went to India, when I was a boy, and from whom we never heard a word afterwards; and, certainly, I, for one, never expected to receive such surprising news of him. Not that I value money for myself, but for you, my dear boy, just at this lucky moment, and for little Amy, it has made me happy beyond expression."

"Do, my dear Grace, explain to me, what this means?" exclaimed Charles, turning to his cousin.

"It means," cried uncle Philip, eagerly, "what I have surely told you already, that cousin Seaton died last year, and left a large fortune to be divided amongst his relations. He did not forget me, nor your father; and the letter I received was from a lawyer, informing me, that he is authorized to pay me a legacy of five thousand pounds, and to divide a similar sum amongst any surviving children of my brother John, if such are still living. Now my dear boy have I not good reason to rejoice?"

"And Amy and I not less so," replied Seaton, now warmly shaking the old gentleman by the hand. "Your news removes a heavy load of anxiety from my heart, and I rejoice that you have now fortune sufficient to make your old age comfortable, and that my dear sister is provided for."

"Yes, Charles, and it is good for you also, to have money at your disposal," said uncle Philip. "There is nothing to be done without it; and no longer compelled to work for your bread, you will be at liberty to collect evidence of your innocence! It seems fortune is weary of tormenting you, and from this day forward, feel a joyful presentiment that success will attend you! I am a fatalist, Charles, I confess. I may be a fool! many men, at all events, think me so; but I am of opinion, that, though a man may bravely battle against the flood of misfortune, he cannot turn its waves, with all his energies, and all his strength. He must suffer till its course has changed. It is Heaven's will, my boy, and what are we against its overwhelming strength? But the moon is not always in the wane, nor the sun in the winter hemisphere; and the submissive, and the pious, ever hear, as I have done, voices from the woods, and the waters, and the skies, re-

vealing the mysteries of nature, and speaking consolation to its children, till the hour of joy arrives."

"You have had long to wait, dear uncle," returned Seaton, humouring the old man's fancy.

"Yet, all that while, like the swallows when they sleep in winter, I have dreamt of sunny days," answered the old man, "and waking dreams are often more worth than reality to such as I, in whom ambition is extinct, and the time for love gone bye. But for you, Charles, I am right glad that you have money, for you have much to gain. So, my boy, the sooner we get these legacies, the better, and you must present me, without delay, to Mr. Vernon, Grace says; for a lawyer can best answer the letter, and bring the affair to a close."

"Grace is right, sir," answered Charles. "Mr. Vernon is the proper person to employ in this business, and he will re-

quire, at our own good fortune, nearly as much as ourselves."

"It is lucky you have found such a friend," rejoined uncle Philip; "and I tell you what he shall likewise do! He shall make my will! Grace is already rich, and after her, I have nobody but you and Amy whom I love in this wide world, so to prevent accidents, I shall give Mr. Vernon directions to make my will, appointing you my sole heirs, so that it may be ready to sign as soon as I get my legacy. Amy shall have a pretty little fortune, Charles," continued the old man, joyfully rubbing his hands, "for no girl—not even a pretty girl—can get a husband without one, now-a-days, and what is still better, she shall be able to live independently, if no honest man ever wins her heart, for remember my words—remember an old man's words, my child, never marry till you are heartily in love, and are quite sure that you can support

much, and make many sacrifices cheerfully and lovingly, for the man to whom you give your hand. Never be frightened at people's laughing at old maids, and such stuff—it is all nonsense, my child."

Amy blushed, and laughed, but made no reply, for to her it appeared an eternity, till she could incur the danger of being considered an ancient spinster.

As Seaton was aware that Mr. Vernon was at that hour to be found in his office, he did not allow uncle Philip any farther delay, but hastened to return with him thither. As he had foreseen, the solicitor was delighted to hear of his good fortune, and readily undertook to arrange the whole business. It was then agreed, that Charles should work no more that day; and warmly thanking Mr. Vernon for his friendly zeal in their behalf, he returned with uncle Philip to pass a happy evening at Grace Dalton's lodgings, it being arranged that the old gentleman should sleep at Mr. Barnes's, and return home on the morrow, by a coach which passed through Linton.

CHAPTER IX.

Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
He is a slave, the meanest we can meet.

WORDSWORTH.

ON the evening of the following day, the happy little party, at Miss Dalton's, were sitting after tea without lights, although the summer evening had closed rapidly, and both the ladies had laid aside their work, to listen, in the dusk, to the account which Seaton gave of many things he had seen during his long absence. It was with profound interest that Grace dwelt

on every word that fell from his lips relating to the history of a time when she lived in ignorance of all that concerned him, but when her soul had participated with bitterness in all his imagined sufferings and feelings. But though Seaton's eyes rested on her with the fondest love, no word of complaint escaped his lips—He made no allusions to the trials he had undergone. They were passed, and he rejoiced, and he loved Grace the more, because she testified no curiosity to lift the veil, which he gladly threw over the period of his humiliation, and fully understood his proud heart, which shrunk from needlessly disclosing the agonizing, and various feelings of body and soul, to which his unjust punishment had subjected him. She could only, from certain expressions, glean how great had been his sufferings, and when he told her, that, but for the remembrance of her love, and the hope of their reunion, he should long have been in the grave, she felt how keen must be the torture, which

can drive a soul soul so noble, and so resolute, to despair and death. But the happiness they won in enjoyed each other's, society was sufficient compensation for the trials they had past, and the only doubt which ever shadowed it, was a secret fear, which neither dared to express, that their felicity was too great to endure, and that some unforeseen event, would yet occur, to interrupt its course. When we love, our fears are no longer for ourselves, but for another, who is far dearer to us, on whose welfare and happiness, our tranquillity, and even our existence depends.

A slight knock at the room door interrupted their cheerful conversation, Grace arose and opened it, but it was already too dark to distinguish who stood without.

"It is only me, Miss Grace," answered a whispering voice, which she recognised with surprise, to be that of old Molly. "If you have company, dear, just shut the door, for I want to ask you a question or two."

Miss Dalton at once complied with the

old woman's request, and immediately afterwards, led her into a back room.

"Now, Molly," she said, "we are alone here, what do you want with me?"

"Well, Miss Grace," she answered," it is just about your cousin Amy. Can you tell me, where she was taken to, after her mother's death?"

"And how can that concern you?" inquired the lady, who was greatly astonished by this unexpected question.

"It just does not concern me in the least, miss," was the reply, "but if you have no objection, I should like to know it, for all that. I have promised to help Mr. Charles, and I must learn everything, if I am to be of any use. I cannot explain to you why, for may be, you might think my ideas very foolish and ridiculous. Do you know where Miss Amy was sent, before she went to her brother?"

"Mr. Dalton was her guardian," answered Grace," and he left the whole business to

Mr. Graves. He was ill, very ill at the time."

"I just thought so," said the widow, as if thinking aloud.

"And Mr. Graves, without informing my uncle, agreed with his wife, that it was best to send the poor little girl out of the way, to her brother, without saying a word about it. Mr. Dalton never knew what had been done, till I came to live with him, and when he heard it for the first time, he was terribly enraged that Mr. Graves had taken advantage of his melancholy state of mind, to sacrifice the innocent child of his sister, in such a heartless manner."

"But cannot you tell into whose hands Mr. Graves gave the poor babe?" persisted Molly; "and what was the name of the people who took her out to Sydney?"

"That I cannot remember!"

"Ah, that is a pity!" returned the old woman.

"What can it now signify?" inquired the lady with some curiosity.

"More perhaps, than any of us dream of," was Molly's reply. "Who can say, Miss Grace, how one little thing hangs to another, in this great world. We are proud, and think we are acting and doing with our own free will, but there is always some circumstance, which we had nothing to do with, and often know nothing about, to shape our fortune according to God's good pleasure; and it is just one of these little circumstances, I am now trying to find out. If you cannot tell me who took the child away, I will just go over to Linton to-morrow, and enquire of Mr. Philip Seaton. He must have had the child till the Graveses took it away, and he will no doubt be able to tell me something about the people who then had charge of it."

"I could have spared you the trouble, had you come this morning," answered

Grace, "for the old gentleman was here with his nephew."

"I could not come here in the morning," said Molly. "I don't wish to be seen too often, by daylight, coming into your house. I hope you understand me—we must be cautious, and so I shall start for Linton before sun rise, if you have any message."

"Wait a while, Molly," said the lady "Mr. Seaton or Amy can perhaps tell you the name of the people, who brought her out, and they are both in the next room, I will ask them," and without further delay, she left the old woman alone.

In a few minutes she returned, accompanied by Charles, who without any questions, simply said, that his sister had been brought from England, by a farmer and his wife, named John and Mary Forrest, who said they came from Ashton, a village in the western and hilly part of the county."

"Thank you, Mr. Seaton," said the old

woman, after she had repeated the names once or twice, to impress them on her memory. "I will now trouble you and Miss Grace no further. I wish you a good evening." And with these words she departed.

As she had said, she was astir on the morrow before sunrise, and on her way to Linton. Though above sixty, she was still healthy and strong, and a walk of a dozen miles in the cool of a summer's morning appeared to her rather a pastime than a trouble. And she undertook this, and far greater labour and toil, from purely disinterested attachment to those whom she had served in early life, and to whom her gratitude and love for the humanity with which they had lightened her servitude, knew no bounds. And the childless, solitary old woman was happy in her labour of love! she felt elated by the consciousness that she, poor, humble, and old, whom the world passed by, without scorn perhaps, but utterly without respect, might

yet do a service to the friends and protectors of her earlier years, which the richest and the proudest would be powerless to render them.

Poor Molly felt for the first time since the death of her husband, that she was no longer a useless incumbrance on the face of the earth. It was a pleasure to her also, to pass through the woods of Linton, where she had often gathered nuts and blackberries in her childhood, though this pleasure was chequered by many thoughts of the past, as the sun arising above the old oak trees, threw its slanting beams into the narrow valley, and lighted the rippling waters of the shallow brook.

"My good man and I, when we were children, gathered many a primrose together on these banks," she thought, "and when he was dying, far away, his heart was often here. Gladly would he have seen the old woods once more, and laid his head beside his father's grave, but it was not to be, and the wide seas are now between us.

But Heaven's will be done, I shall go to him at last, where no waves, nor storms can divide us."

And the old woman sat down on a fallen rock, by the water's edge, and thought as she watched the stream passing by her, of the days that were past and the eternity that is to come.

But her sadness quickly departed. The strong hope of a good and pious mind, made her habitually cheerful, and she was fully persuaded that it was her duty to be so, as long as she remained on earth, where she ever felt she had much to be thankful for. The fresh air of the morning, and the songs of the birds, and the pleasant odours of the woods, filled her heart with gratitude to her Creator, and after murmuring a prayer of thanksgiving and love to the invisible father of all, who has conferred these treasures on the humblest of his servants who know how to value them aright, the poor widow pursued her way with renewed lightness of heart. It seemed

as if she had been holding commune with the spirits of nature, and it had lent her renewed strength to fulfil the appointed course which divided her from the secrets of the tomb.

Let no one suppose, that the favoured children of education and wealth are alone capable of high and holy thoughts, which bear the soul away far above the visible things of earth to feel that love and truth, and virtue, have an eternal existence in harmony with which man's only good exists. Such a sentiment no education can confer, and in the gift of the innate power of loving all that is beautiful in the moral and visible world nature has made no distinction between the rich and poor.

As uncle Philip's cottage lay in the way to the village of Ashton, Molly determined at all events to visit him. She found the old man digging in his garden, whistling a cheerful air, which he only interrupted from time to time to address the favourite cat, who sat gravely watching his labours,

or to throw a few peas from his coat pocket to the pigeons which were strutting about before his cottage door. A white goat lay with half shut eyes quietly eating cabbage leaves in the sun, whilst uncle Philip alternately talked to his pet animals, as if they were human beings, for they had long been almost his only companions, and a perfectly good understanding existed between them.

The old gentleman had told his cat more than a dozen times that morning, that he must not neglect his garden now he had become a rich man, for his garden had supported him in time of need, and then the goat arose and came and rubbed its head against him, as if it sought to remind him, that she also had claims on his gratitude.

Philip Seaton had ever been hospitable in his greatest poverty, and now when he could be generous without fear of hunger on the morrow, he lost no time, but quickly placed a plentiful breakfast on the table and invited old Molly to partake of it with

him. He was glad to have a companion to whom he could unburthen the joy of his heart, and talk without restraint of the happy change in his own and his nephew's fortune. Though he had not seen Molly for long, they had been acquainted with each other from childhood, and he well knew, she had been a true and faithful servant to his sister.

He showed her the pretty baskets he had partly maintained himself by making, and he assured her, that though he should for the future be a rich man, he could not live in idleness, but should work for others who were in need. He then frankly told her, how great was his delight that his nephew and niece had been participators in his good fortune.

Molly seized this occasion to praise the beauty of Amy, and her sweet disposition, and then carelessly asked her host, if she had not lived with him for a short time after the death of her mother?

"Not long!" he replied. "The Graveses

were afraid that her uncle Dalton might see her, and take a fancy to her, as she was just the age of the little girl he had lost. Oh, I understood them well enough, and so they determined to send her off to her brother by the first opportunity."

"And they did so, as I have heard!" said the widow, "but who took her out, sir?"

"A broken down farmer from Ashton," answered uncle Philip. "His name was Forrest—he was a brother, I believe, of Lucy Forrest, the nursery-maid at Mr. Dalton's, and became a bankrupt, and Lucy, I suppose, recommended him to Mr. Graves, who engaged to pay him well for taking out the child."

"Ha! ha! Lucy Forrest sent her out, did she?" answered the old woman. "She appears to have been very busy in all Mr. Seaton's affairs."

"She came here, and took away my little niece," answered Uncle Philip, "and she told me I need not be uneasy; for her

sister-in-law would take care of her, as if she was her own daughter—for she had no children. I never saw, nor heard of my dear little Amy again, till she came here one morning with her brother, like an angel from Heaven, a fair and innocent creature, as eyes can rest upon."

"Yes, she is a lovely young woman. I never thought she would grow up so handsome," was Molly's reply.

"Children change like our garden flowers," said Uncle Philip. "No one can judge from the closed bud of the beauty of the full blown rose when it opens to the sun. Where are you going, Molly, may I ask?"

"To visit some friends in the west," answered the old woman; and unwilling to be farther questioned, she arose from her seat, and telling Uncle Philip that she had far to travel before sunset, and must now depart, she wished him good morning; and again thanking him for his hospitality, recommenced her journey.

It was a bright sunny day ; and a pleasant breeze, which had somewhat the freshness of autumn, came over the western hills as Molly descended, by a sheep track amongst the heath, from the wide and desolate moors, which she had trodden for many hours, without seeing a human being. But though the scene was lonely, it was far from sad. The various lines of hill and dale, extending far around—the vast expanse of the ever changing sky, where light fleecy clouds, as they floated on the breeze, chequered the earth with shadows—the long, blue line of the distant ocean—the purple and yellow flowers of the heath, and the furze, covering like an embroidered mantle the uncultivated ground, and the hum of the bees as they flitted over the honey blossoms, were cheering to the mind from the feeling they excited of boundless liberty and peace. Nature was there in all its freshness, and its sweetness, and its vigour ; and though the luxuriant vegetation to be found in southern lands was

wanting the wildness of the boundless scene, had an equal charm for the natives of that hilly district, at the foot of which lay Linton, where Molly was born.

The sun was still above the horizon, when a sudden turn of the path brought her full in sight of the village of Ashton. She sat down on a stone beside a clear source of fresh water, which there burst forth from the broken bank, not only to rest, but to consider what plan was best to pursue, in order to procure the information of which she had come thither in search. Nearly fourteen years had passed since the Forrests had left Ashton; but, in such a secluded village, where few events occur to interrupt the monotony of daily labour, she trusted they were not yet forgotten; and that, from those who remembered them, there might yet exist a chance of obtaining some trace of Lucy Forrest. But, unluckily, she knew no one in the village. As she had resolved, however, to pass the night there, she decided to

seek a lodging at the humblest ale-house in the place, and leave the rest to chance.

The village was nothing more than a long, straggling street of rude stone cottages of various sizes—which, during the progress of ages, had been built along the banks of a wild mountain river, where the conveniences of a mill and a ford had first attracted the peasantry to fix their abodes.

It had nothing picturesque, but the clear waters and their rocky channel, with the three pointed arches of the old Gothic bridge which spanned it. The cottages were solidly, but rudely, built, without gardens or ornament of any kind—but their inhabitants were orderly, cleanly, and industrious people, who derived their maintenance from the sheep upon the hills; knitting and spinning were still the principal occupations of the women; and luxury had yet made little progress in this secluded valley. Amongst such a primitive set of people, it was not wonderful that Molly

found only one public house, and that of a very humble description.

When she entered, there was no one in the kitchen but the landlady, a comely woman about five and forty, who was spinning wool. She received the old woman very civilly, notwithstanding her apparent poverty, and brushing down with her apron one of the bright beech chairs, placed it for her near the fire.

Poor Molly said, she had walked far and should be glad if she could have a bed for the night, and a cup of tea. The good woman of the house answered, that both were at her service, and that as her husband was away at the market, and would not be at home till late, they could drink their tea together.

"And where may you come from? may I ask," added Mrs. Hall, with the simple curiosity of a person to whom a stranger, even of Molly's humble appearance, was a source of interest and amusement.

"I was born at Linton," answered the

old woman, "but I was long in foreign parts; for I am a soldier's widow."

"And what may bring you all the way to Ashton?"

"Just curiosity! I have been so long used to moving about, that I get tired of sitting lonely by my own fire side, and so I thought I would just take a walk up among the hills this fine summer weather, and ask after a few of my old acquaintance."

"Do you know anybody hereabouts?" was the natural question of Mrs. Hall, the landlady.

"Nobody now!" returned Molly, who had now lighted her pipe, laid aside her black silk, high crowned bonnet and shawl, and made herself perfectly at home. "But there was once a girl in service with me, before I married, who came from this neighbourhood. She had relations in the village, and I am told, these people took my dead mistress's orphan child out to Australia with them, and I want to learn the truth of the story."

"You are speaking of the Forrests, I imagine."

"Just so! you knew them perhaps?"

"Oh, yes! I knew them well enough," replied Mrs. Hall. "The husband took a farm at too high a rent when he married, and soon got into debt and difficulties. He was a gay, dashing sort of fellow, who had once been a horse doctor, and people said he was not very scrupulous in matters of business. For my part, I can say nothing about that. They had no children, but one winter morning we were all surprised to see a pretty little girl running in and out of the house, and people said it was Lucy Forrest's, Mrs. Forrest's sister's, and that as she was not married, she had sent it there to be out of the way. Nobody knew exactly, but it was certain, that from that time the Forrests had more money at their disposal."

"And how long may this be ago?" inquired Molly, whose curiosity was now excited to the highest pitch.

"I cannot tell you exactly," answered the landlady. "It might be half a year or so before they went away."

"And did a second little girl ever come to them here?"

"No! nobody else ever came. Not even Lucy Forrest to wish them a good voyage."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure," answered the landlady. "What may have happened after they left this, I cannot say; for no one here ever received any news of them. They promised to write, but never did."

"And do you know, by chance, what has become of Lucy Forrest?" inquired Molly.

"They say she fell into a very bad way of life, after her relations went away, and she got into some trouble about a trial, which quite unsettled her in her mind. She wanders about the country in summer begging. She was here not more than a fortnight ago. I hardly knew her again."

"Poor creature! She was pretty and

vain, and fell into bad hands. She is heavily punished for whatever she has done amiss," answered old Molly, in a voice of compassion. "Did you speak to her?"

"It was a pouring rain," answered Mrs. Hall, "and she came in here dripping with wet, and sat down on a stool by the fire-side, without saying a word, as if she was quite lost. I had not the heart to turn her to the door. She has been bad perhaps, but she has latterly been a poor outcast sufferer, and if she has any thing on her conscience, her burthen is heavy enough already, and I thought it was not my duty to upbraid her, and so I just gave her a cup of milk and bread, and let her sit undisturbed, to rest, and dry her poor rags of clothes, as long as she pleased. She sighed very often, and muttered to herself, till it made my heart ache to hear her."

"Do you know where she went to," inquired Molly, eagerly.

"She slept in our barn that night; but

in the morning she was off before sunrise. We none of us saw her again. The evening before, she talked something about going back to the town, and trying to quiet her troubled conscience before she died; and then she spoke of the ingratitude of some one, who, after bei ng her ruin, would gladly see her in the grave; but nobody could understand her rightly."

"Most likely she has gone back to the town," said Molly. "I knew her when she was young, and I should be glad to help her as far as I could. A kind word may often lead a sinner's soul to repentance, when friendless and despised."

"Then, may be, you'll take charge of this parcel for her," said the landlady, taking a torn, dirty-looking pocket handkerchief, knotted together, out of a drawer. "We found it in the barn after she left. My husband opened it," she continued, as she untied the bundle, "and we would gladly have sent it to her, for I suppose she sets a worth upon these things

though nobody else would. You see there is nothing but an old watch riband, and a lock of dark brown hair, in the back of an old letter."

Molly's quick eye, in an instant, saw the name of Charles Seaton on the corner of the pocket handkerchief, and from the colour of the hair, she had little doubt that it was also his, as well as the writing on the letter back, which was addressed to Mr. Dalton. The old woman knew enough of human nature, and of ungoverned passion to feel no astonishment, at finding that such relics of the man, whom she had ruined, were still hoarded as her last treasure, by this poor outcast. Molly had never doubted that Seaton had been the object of her unrequited passion—although Graves made her his victim, and his tool, when her wounded vanity caused her to vow vengeance against him who had slighted her proffered love. But that feeling had probably passed, when she saw the fearful consequences of her false testi-

mony against him—and she fully understood the purposes for which Graves had encouraged her hatred and jealousy, and softened by misfortune, she still clung to the remembrance of the first object of her love.

"You may trust the things to me in all safety," said Molly, after sitting lost in thought for some minutes. "I will be sure to deliver them into her own hands. My name is Molly Temple, and I am always to be heard of at Mr. Dalton's colliery."

At this moment, the sound of a horse approaching up the street, at a quick trot, was plainly to be heard. The landlady's attention was instantly arrested, by what she supposed to be the pace of a traveller, and she sprang, at once, from her seat at the tea table. She had scarcely time to run to the window, before the rider stopped, and dismounted at her door. An old bandy-legged ostler quickly appeared from a neighbouring shed, where he had, till then, been employed in threshing, and

taking charge of the horse, the stranger walked into the house, where Mrs. Hall stood ready to receive him with a profusion of curtsies.

As he was very well dressed, she was about to shew him into what she considered her best parlour; but he said he preferred the kitchen, and a good fire, as the evenings began to get chilly, and he should be very glad to take a cup of tea he saw already prepared. Molly did not arise from the corner where she was seated, when the stranger entered, and as her appearance gave no reason to suppose that she was not an inhabitant of the house, he scarcely remarked her presence, but drawing a chair with considerable noise and affected importance between Mrs. Hall's tea-table and the fire, he stretched out his legs to their full length, and crossing his arms upon his breast, sat very much at his ease, whilst the landlady prepared a plate of buttered toast.

Molly, in the meanwhile, examined him

with her usual sagacity. He was very well dressed, but not a gentleman, and might, probably, be about forty years of age. With a high nose, a receding forehead, projecting eyes, and altogether an audacious, yet a cunning expression, there was nothing pleasing in his exterior. The old woman thought rightly, that he was probably a clerk in some commercial office. He was very facetious and condescending to Mrs. Hall, and evidently wished to make her think that he was somebody of consequence, and might, probably, have taken yet more pains to render himself agreeable had the landlady been younger and prettier. As it was, she kept him at a proper distance, and felt very inquisitive as to what had brought him there.

"Shall I prepare a bed for you, sir?" she inquired, as she poured him out a second cup of tea.

"Cannot say, upon honour! have not yet decided," he replied. "I have a little business to settle, and it is impossible to

know how much time it may require. Is your husband at home, my good woman?"

"No sir," she returned, "he has gone to the cattle market at Allerton, and wont be back yet awhile."

"Sorry for that! sorry for that, upon honour! wanted to speak to him; a little private affair. Expect him home soon?"

"I cannot say, sir. He may not come back before ten o'clock at night," answered Mrs. Hall, "he may be back in an hour. Can I serve you in any way?"

"Are you in the habit of transacting business for your husband, when he is absent, Mrs. Hall?" inquired the stranger, with a very insinuating smile.

"I am obliged to do it, for he is in the wool trade, and is often from home for days together," she said.

"You don't say so," cried the traveller. "Well, upon my word, he is very lucky to have such a very admirable wife. Why you actually save him the expense of a clerk! quite a woman of business!"

"We know nothing about clerks, sir. We just settle our little affairs in a plain, honest way, and there is no great school learning necessary fo. that."

"I am glad to hear you think so," was the reply; "because, perhaps, you and I may be able to come to an understanding at once, so that I may have time to get home again to-night, which could not be the case, had I to wait for your husband."

"And pray, if I may be so bold, what may your business be?" inquired the landlady, with a certain cautious expression, which Molly failed not to observe, for though she was perfectly capable of arranging any money matters in which her husband might be concerned, she was also, from experience, very prudent in her dealings with an entire stranger.

"Perhaps you are aware, Mrs. Hall," replied the traveller, "that when your husband was in town last week, he received a hundred pounds from a gentleman there, as the payment of a balance due to him,

in a little shipping speculation, which the said gentleman had conducted for him."

"Oh yes, sir," said the landlady, "we are going to buy a piece of land at the back of the house, and I have long begged my husband not to risk his money on the high seas."

"A very prudent woman, upon my honour, and perfectly right to prefer land to water, ma'am! You have not bought the land yet, you say?"

"I believe my husband has gone to the lawyer about it, this very day, sir!"

"Then he has not paid for it yet, I presume?"

"La, sir! we must first have the title deeds, and all things in proper order," said Mrs. Hall, somewhat sharply. "We don't pay away money in that light way, trust me."

"Very right, madam! very right and proper—I applaud your spirit, and your prudence. You, probably, therefore, have this money still in the house?"

"And I should like to know, what is that to you, sir?" returned the good woman, becoming, in a moment, as red as scarlet, when she remembered her unprotected position, and that, probably, the old ostler was, at that time, out of hearing. But she was a woman of spirit, not to be alarmed by a trifle, and casting a look at Molly, she resolved to be on her guard.

"No offence, madam, no offence, I beg," said the stranger, smiling at the suspicions which he saw his unguarded questions had excited. "I mean nothing unpleasant, upon my honor. Your husband and I are very old acquaintance, and if you knew me better, you would have no doubt of my friendly intentions. I have come here entirely for your advantage, I assure you, so I beg you will put yourself quite at your ease."

"I should be glad to know your business, sir," answered Mrs. Hall, very drily.

"To the point then, ma'am," answered the clerk, giving his chair a little jerk

nearer to the landlady's. "Perhaps you are aware that your husband received a cheque on the county bank, at thirty days' date, as part payment of the money we have been speaking of."

"Yes, I do happen to know it," said the landlady. "I hate such paper, for my part. I told my husband I would have taken nothing but money in hand, if I had been in his place. I like to know what I have."

"You are quite right! a capital woman of business, upon my word!" retorted the stranger.

"And so, I suppose, you have just come to tell us, that this cheque is not worth a straw!" exclaimed Mrs. Hall, now becoming pale with the apprehension of losing her hard earned eighty pounds.

"Not quite so bad as that, ma'am," he said, with infinite tranquillity; "but my employer saw that your husband was not satisfied with the cheque; nay, as Mr. Hall said, it would put him to considerable in-

convenience, he regretted much, he had not ready money by him, at the moment, when, to say the truth, your worthy husband was unusually pressing for payment."

"Aye, I told him not to come home the third time, empty handed," observed the landlady.

"Just so," said the unknown, with a nod; "so he took the cheque against his will; but my employer having received large cash payments, the very day after, he could not think of good Mr. Hall being put to any inconvenience, and he has sent me over to pay you the eighty pounds, in good Bank of England notes, on the return of the cheque."

"And if that is what you have to say to me, why in the name of fortune did you not speak out at once, instead of half-frightening me out of my wits?" demanded the good woman, in a very softened tone.

"Because I was not certain that you

could arrange the business, or get at the money, during your husband's absence. It is not all wives, I assure you, madam, who can be treated with such confidence," returned the clerk in a most flattering tone. "I am delighted to find I can come at once to an arrangement, which, it appears, is so much to your satisfaction;" and he forthwith took a pocket-book from his coat pocket, and began to count out the fair bank notes upon the table, to the infinite delight of Mrs. Hall.

The landlady asked no more questions, but immediately arose, and proceeded up stairs, from whence she returned in an incredibly short space of time, with the cheque for eighty pounds in her hand.

"You see it is all right, sir," she said, laying the paper on the table before her visitor.

"Yes—ma'am—yes—eighty pounds at thirty days' date, duly signed and endorsed by a very substantial man, but as your husband seemed not to like waiting so long,

here is the money at once, and no discount to pay," and he handed the notes to Mrs. Hall, who carefully counted them over, without saying a word, although she was infinitely delighted by the exchange she had made, and she had in reality much more cause to be so than she was at all aware.

"The sum exactly, ma'am, if I am not mistaken," said the stranger, smiling with a sort of triumphant satisfaction, as he folded up the cheque, and deposited it in his pocket-book.

"Yes, sir, the sum exactly!" returned Mrs. Hall, after counting her notes a second time.

"Pray what can I set before you, sir? You would surely prefer something stronger than tea! A rasher of bacon and a glass of whiskey punch, perhaps?"

"Thank you, Mrs. Hall—very much obliged indeed, but I must get home to-night, if possible. I should be glad to have my horse brought round without

further delay. · It has eaten its corn by this time, no doubt, Will you be so good as to order it, or shall I go myself ?"

"John—John ostler, the gentleman's horse," screamed Mrs. Hall, at the top of her voice, from the house door, and in a few minutes, her command was obeyed, and the horse was led up from the stable.

The stranger hastily paid his reckoning, and had reached the passage, when the landlady laid her hand upon his arm and said, "I beg your pardon, sir, but when my husband returns, who shall I say has been here? I should be glad to know your name, sir."

"Mr. Barton! Hall knows me very well!—give him Mr. Barton's compliments, and he will understand the whole affair perfectly. I wish you good evening," said the stranger, as he sprung on his saddle, secretly laughing at the good woman's simplicity, in not asking this question a little sooner. Then touching his hat, he rode down the village as

quickly as he came, and was soon lost to view.

But, James Hall, when he returned from market, and found that his wife had exchanged the cheque for real good bank of England notes, though he was very much pleased, did not understand the business at all. He knew Mr. Barton very well, he said, he was a very honest man, as far as he could tell, and by his wife's description, it could have been no other, who had been there, but what could make him come there to purchase the cheque, was entirely beyond his comprehension, for as there was an excellent name at the back of it, he had never hesitated about accepting it, so what Mr. Barton had said on that score, was a pure fabrication, to work on the credulity of Mrs. Hall.

But as the landlord was a man of few words, and said very little upon the subject, Molly could not discover who was Mr. Barton's employer, and she did not like to take the liberty of asking any

questions. Nevertheless, the whole affair strongly excited the old woman's curiosity, for she felt perfectly convinced there was some mystery attending it.

She had no hope of learning any more in the village concerning the Forrests, or the unfortunate Lucy, than Mrs. Hall had related to her, and as she had no other reason for remaining at Ashton, she paid her reckoning that night, and before sun-rise on the morrow, was pursuing her way over the short dewy turf upon the hills, towards the county town from whence she came.

CHAPTER X.

It's no in titles nor in rank
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank
To purchase peace and rest,
If happiness has not her seat
And centre in the breast.

Shakespere.

SEATON daily beheld with delight, the progress which his young sister made, under the instruction, and in the society of Grace Dalton. Like a fair picture in the sunshine where a thousand beautiful tints became visible, which, though existing in the shade were undiscernible to common eyes. Even the graces of her person

seemed to be developed by the genial atmosphere in which her soul expanded. Her youthful gaiety of heart, which had been crushed though not destroyed by adversity, returned, and tempered by the grace which was natural to her, added new charms to her innocent beauty.

Every day her admiration of her cousin Grace increased, as she could better estimate the noble qualities of her mind; and Grace loved Amy as a young sister, in the cultivation of whose pure, unselfish and artless character she had discovered a new source of pleasure. Seaton watched the growth of their mutual affection with unclouded satisfaction. For the first time for many years, he felt the recovered enjoyment of those family and domestic ties of love, which are the source of all the tenderest and noblest feelings of the human heart. He was no longer alone, he felt that he too had his nest, where he could return to find repose, and indulge, unrestrained by the fear of indifference, or

mockery or scorn, the natural impulses of his heart; that not only the smiles of affection, but the sweet and elevating converse of women of fine and cultivated minds, awaited him, when his daily task was done, to refresh his soul by pure, exalted feelings, uncontaminated by the technical studies and petty interest which are frequently the necessary business of men.

The evenings spent in Grace's little drawing room, in spite of the uncertainty in which the destiny of the three cousins was still involved, had inexpressible charms for them all, and perhaps the value of these precious hours was even enhanced to Seaton, by the dread natural to one long accustomed to misfortune, least some unlooked for event should occur to destroy a happiness, which seemed to him almost too bright and perfect to endure.

He continued as he had before done, to spend his mornings in Mr. Vernon's office, as the expected legacies of his deceased

relative had not yet been paid. Grace devoted the early hours of the day to Amy's instruction, and went accompanied by her every afternoon to visit the poor, and assist in the parish schools.

The fever continued its previous ravages amongst the unfortunate families of those who had been paid off by Mr. Graves, till it gradually extended itself to the surrounding neighbourhood near the river amongst the workmen whom he still employed, but who suffered greatly from a diminution of wages. Owing to political circumstances a similar state of deprivation and misery had become very general amongst the working classes throughout the whole country, and a spirit of discontent and mutiny had in many parts become so menacing, that it had been thought necessary to increase the military force in several of the principal manufacturing towns in various parts of England. The cries of poverty and hunger were only attended to as warnings that acts of desperation might

follow, which must be put down by force; it never seemed to occur to those who composed the majority of the people's representatives, that positive evils must exist to cause this exasperating misery to a large mass of the population, which it was their duty to endeavour to remedy before they sought to stifle the impatience of the sufferers by force of arms. The fact was, these sufferers were unrepresented, and the representatives of property regarded them as dangerous encroachers upon their privileges, and perhaps their profits. Free trade has already put an end to many of these evils, without realizing the misfortunes which its opposers believed, or pretended to believe, would follow this concession to the wants and necessities of an ever-increasing population.

Mr. Graves was one of the loudest to exclaim against the depravity of the people, and the audacious designs of the radicals, who excited them to the plunder of the rich and the subversion of Church

and State. To have listened to him, it might have been supposed that the well being of the latter was totally independent of the happiness and prosperity of the people—and that the supremacy of such men as himself was absolutely necessary to the existence of the nation. He was always complaining of the times and the state of trade; and though he suffered neither hunger nor thirst, he considered he had a right to murmur, as many of his speculations, undertaken on credit, had returned him not the tenth part of the profits he anticipated, while some had failed altogether.

But, as the money he had lost, chiefly belonged to other people, Mr. and Mrs. Graves continued to live in the same expensive style, to which they had been accustomed so long, that they considered it their right; and some trifling successes in trade, enabled the gentleman to maintain the appearance of credit. He continued to be most assiduous in his visits to Mr.

Dalton; and though his wife had been refused admission to her uncle, since Grace had left the house, he still continued to indulge in the hopes that she would, eventually, be that gentleman's heires. Nothing but his extreme good opinion of himself, could have blinded him to the fact, that Mr. Dalton received his visits rather from a curiosity to watch his manœuvres, than from any pleasure he enjoyed in his society.

He was too narrow-minded to understand the expansive charity of Mr. Dalton's heart; and to feel that, though he had judged it incompatible with his duty to allow his niece to remain, under existing circumstances, beneath his roof, he yet entertained no enmity against her, for pursuing what, on her side, she believed the right course —and that, when he heard she had taken Amy, his sister's destitute and innocent child, under her care, he rejoiced that she had so wisely and humanely done this act of charity—which it was not in his power to perform. Graves, on the contrary, lost

no opportunity of throwing out hints to Grace's disadvantage—hoping, thereby, to please the old gentleman, whom, though he never mentioned her name, he presumed to be highly incensed against her. Gradually he became more tranquil on the subject of Seaton's return,—as, in spite of his apprehensions, whatever they might have been, several weeks elapsed without anything occurring which had any reference to this event. The world in which he moved appeared to be entirely ignorant of the poor convict's return; and Mrs. Graves had no cause to feel that her ambition to shine in society was likely to be disappointed in consequence of this circumstance, however others might tend to diminish the consideration she had long been struggling to attain.

She took her place as one of the lady presidents of the fancy fair; her name appeared, to her great satisfaction, in the county newspapers, and she carried off the sixty pounds of the receipts—for which she had

stipulated—although she left a very small balance, for the benefit of the mission, in the hands of the treasurer. But all this was very far from affording her the satisfaction she had anticipated. The bazaar did not prove to be so amicable an association as might have been expected, from the ostensible, pious object of its institution. Numerous petty jealousies, and polite quarrels, occurred between the ladies of the society, even before the day of their appearance in public; and though, at their respective stalls, they exerted all their powers of pleasing, to draw money from the pockets of their admirers, yet no inconsiderable share of envy, hatred, and malice, filled the hearts of the fair rivals for public favor. Lady Giles was offended that Mrs. Graves divided with her the honors of the presidentship, and though she smothered her anger till the sale was over, it, at last, broke forth in bitter and saucy reproaches. The two professed friends, forgetting their affected elegance,

in their unguarded wrath, made use of language more suited to their humble origin, than to their assumed position, language, such as rendered all apologies impossible, and caused, for the future, the bitterest enmity between them.

The story soon got in circulation; ladies, who affected fashion, and had, till then, been secretly envious of Mrs. Graves, found this a happy occasion for mortifying her vanity, and all took the part of Lady Giles. Mrs. Graves strove to revive her popularity by a very gay ball, but though it cost a great deal of money, infinitely to her mortification, it proved a failure, whilst a concert, given by Lady Giles, was the admiration of the whole town.

In fact, so many whispered reports were in circulation, as to the embarrassed state of Mr. Graves's affairs, that those who are most ready to offer their adulation to the successful and the wealthy, began to turn away towards others, whose fortune, for the time, was considered more flourishing.

The position of Martha was not to be envied. The continual and daily increasing ill-humour of her husband seemed to lend confirmation to the hints she now frequently received from good-natured friends, that his affairs were less flourishing than formerly, and her own extravagance had entangled her in a number of petty embarrassments, which hourly became more tormenting. She often thought of applying once more for assistance to her cousin Grace, but she knew she had left Mr. Dalton's house in order to befriend the Seatons, and when she remembered her own conduct towards Charles, on his return, she felt that all hope of aid from that quarter, was utterly in vain. To Mr. Dalton she could not even gain admittance, and even had she seen him daily, she could not have ventured to disclose her difficulties to one, who treated her, at all times, with the most chill and formal politeness.

She had no friend to whom she could

turn for consolation; she then bitterly felt, that she was neither loved nor respected by any human being. Reflection was painful to her, and in society she feared to betray, by word, or look, to her acquaintance, the secret anxiety concerning her husband's affairs, which rankled in her heart. From him she could obtain no answer to her questions; and to escape from anxious thoughts, she plunged even deeper than before into extravagance and dissipation.

Mr. Graves cared very little how much money she spent, provided he was not called upon to pay it, for he was becoming daily more reckless and desperate. At the commencement of his career, he had sought popularity by establishing a Savings' Bank, in which several of the most influential men in the town were trustees with himself. Monthly audits had long been carefully attended by all the members, and the accounts examined with due regularity. Gradually, however, the as-

siduity of these gentlemen diminished. Some died, and were replaced by others, who took no interest in the matter. Some became old or idle, and, supposing that everything went on as usual, merely glanced at the accounts, now and then, as a matter of form. But Mr. Graves was as active as ever, and by his unwearied attention and perseverance, had long had the whole direction of the business in his own hands.

He placed a humble relative, on whose integrity, he said, he could depend, as the accountant in the office, and between them they managed matters all as he pleased.

On the morning after old Molly's visit to Ashton, this person being absent ftom his post, Mr. Graves came to officiate in his stead. He gladly availed himself of his solitude in the office, to inspect the accounts more narrowly than usual, and to make certain entries therein, which were necessary for his personal interest.

It then occurred to him, for some

reason best known to himself, that he would count over the money in the strong box, which he had not done since the last monthly audit.

Very few deposits had been made, owing to the general distress, and these were quickly compared with the entries in the books. He then opened a roll of sovereigns, on the exterior of which was inscribed—reserve one hundred and fifty pounds. This money had been placed there by himself, during a previous absence of his clerk—such a sum being absolutely necessary to maintain appearances. should the trustees ever cast a glance over the accounts. But it was only there for show; and Mr. Graves had casually told his clerk not to use this gold in payment of any deposits which might be called in, as he should want it shortly, to pay a foreign ship captain.

He now observed, with considerable anxiety that, in spite of this injunction, the paper appeared to have been recently opened

and he hastily proceeded to count its contents. Three sovereigns were wanting to make up the sum he had placed there. In vain he looked amongst the loose cash in search of these coins, which he could have distinguished amongst ten thousand. They were not there ; and, at length, fully convinced of this fact, Mr. Graves again folded up the roll of sovereigns, with a fearful presentiment of evil, for which, such a trifling circumstance, seemed by no means sufficiently to account. He determined, after a few minutes' reflection, that the remainder of the gold should be removed, at all hazards, that very day, and, in pursuance of this resolution, he had just placed it in his pocket, when his clerk, Mr. Barton, entered the office.

Even from this man, who was associated in many of his intrigues, he wished to conceal the mystery attached to these sovereigns, and, at once, assuming a smiling countenance, he welcomed him with as cheerful a voice as he could

assume, and a studied appearance of cordiality.

"Bravo, my good fellow—you have used despatch, at all events," he exclaimed, as soon as the clerk had closed the door behind him. "Successfully, I hope."

"Yes, my dear sir, perfect success," he replied, rubbing his hands with exultation, and there was considerably less respect in his manner, than he usually thought proper to assume towards his employer.

"You have got the cheque then, I am to presume?" returned Mr. Graves, holding out his hand to receive the expected paper.

"Yes, I have got it, sir—though with considerable difficulty," answered Barton. "The landlord, Hall, had no doubt of your solvency, particularly when the paper was endorsed by such a substantial man as Mr. Dalton, and he hesitated to give it up, for he said, it was much more convenient to him, at that moment, than bank notes."

"But he exchanged it, nevertheless, I

think you said," returned the banker, in a somewhat impatient tone of voice. "Why don't you give it me, at once ?"

"There is no hurry—excuse me, Mr. Graves," said Barton, with a smile of unwonted malice and triumph on his usually placid and inexpressive face.

"Sir ! what is the meaning of this insolence ?" exclaimed his master, regarding him with mingled astonishment, impatience, and wrath. The audacious transformation of this generally servile sycophant, had something in it perfectly appalling to him at that moment.

"I mean exactly what I say, sir," was Barton's cool reply. "There are no secrets and mysteries in my dealings. I am a man of few words. I have spared no fatigue to fulfil your wishes in this business with all despatch. I have succeeded in getting back the cheque, as you desired, and have it now in my pocket book ; but, I must candidly tell you, sir, that, in return for my trouble, I should be glad to

learn from you, before I deliver it up, the reasons which made you so anxious to withdraw it from circulation, when it is already accepted, and becomes due the day after to-morrow ?"

"That is no concern of yours," answered Graves, who, although deadly pale, had entirely subdued his anger, and spoke in a calm and measured tone. "You strangely forget your position, Mr. Barton !"

"Not at all, sir !" was the clerk's audacious reply. "The cheque is not yet in your possession—it is in mine—sir ; and twenty years ago, the name of Mr. Dalton written at the back of it, would have been sufficient to bring you to the gallows, Mr. Graves."

"Scoundrel !" cried the banker, springing forward and seizing Barton by the collar, "this language is not to be borne. Miserable beggar! have you forgotten that you owe the very bread you eat to my protection ; and that a word of mine would suffice to throw you out again upon the

world without a character and without employment."

"But you dare not speak such a word," replied the clerk, very coolly releasing Mr. Graves's fingers from his throat, "you dare not speak it, because I know rather more about you, than you do about me. Don't misunderstand me—I will not submit to be threatened; but I have no intention to threaten you. Our mutual interest has long been in our mutual good understanding; but you trust me only by halves, and then expect I should do all your most unpleasant jobs for you without reaping any profit. But I am as sharp a man of business as yourself, Mr. Graves; and that name of Mr. Dalton cannot deceive me. I have seen that gentleman's writing too often, to believe that he wrote it—and I did not go to Ashton in such a hurry to get it into my hands, for nothing, I promise you. So, now you know my meaning, and you are at perfect liberty to

act as you think best for your own interest."

Graves drew back. He had been surprised—dismayed—but his keen sense quickly gained the mastery over his terrors. He had eyed Barton with a penetrating and searching glance as he uttered the foregoing words. He understood at once, that the man whose feeble sentiments of rectitude, he had systematically corrupted for his own ends, had now, no other object than gain. For money he would do anything. Graves comprehended therefore, that he had no choice. He knew he was in his power; and conscious that the name of Mr. Dalton was a forgery, he saw he must pay whatever he pleased to demand for the cheque; but a shudder passed over him as he came to this conclusion—for he knew that, though money might, for the hour, assure his silence, he was, thenceforth, for ever, in this fellow's power—who, after he had once dared to

profit by his fears, would not fail to menace him with the disclosure of various other transactions, which, though less criminal, would suffice, if made public, to destroy his character, and to ruin him irretrievably in the commercial world.

But there was no time for hesitation; and with as much composure as he could assume, he inquired the amount of the remuneration which Mr. Barton expected on the delivery of the cheque.

"Fifty pounds," was the clerk's cool reply.

"You shall have the money as soon as I can bring it from the bank," answered his master, in the same tone.

"Why not at once?" inquired Barton. "There is cash enough here to satisfy me."

"Not without the gold."

"And why not the gold? gold, or notes, it is all the same to me, and really, sir, the sooner the business is settled the better, for I should not like to part from you till the whole affair is in order."

"I want the gold for a particular purpose," answered Graves, in slight confusion. "But, perhaps, with twenty pounds I have in my pocket-book, there may be enough to satisfy you here; without that, I think I counted forty pounds in the strong box just now."

And this was in fact the case. The fifty pounds required by Mr. Barton were quickly placed in his hands, and Mr. Graves received the cheque, in return. He examined it narrowly, and then convinced that it was the right paper, he threw it on the fire-place, set fire to it with a lucifer match, and then stood watching it with a feeling of indescribable bitterness, as it blazed for an instant, till nothing more remained than a black film.

"I have paid dear enough for the short accommodation the trick afforded me," he thought.

Mr. Barton made no observation, but with a chuckling laugh deposited his fifty pounds in his pocket, and buttoned that up

very close, with the gratifying feeling that he had at length begun to revenge himself for the long insults and humiliations to which Mr. Graves had subjected him.

The banker now took his hat and stick to depart, but before he reached the door he turned round, and said with well assumed carelessness—

"Ah, by the way, I find three sovereigns have been taken from the roll of gold in the box! though I think I mentioned to you that I wished the sum, if possible, to remain entire?"

"It was unavoidable, sir," answered Barton, resuming his usual submissive tone and manner. "There was a very sharp run on us here for several days, when you were absent; my cash was exhausted; I had no one at hand to send to the bank, and I was compelled to open the packet. But I always intended to replace the three sovereigns I took from it, I beg your pardon, I quite forgot it, till you mentioned it."

"Oh, no matter—no matter! do you happen to remember to whom you paid the gold?"

"Yes, quite distinctly. To a man named Gibson, who was formerly one of your workmen. He is one of those who was paid off, and so was obliged to draw out his little savings, no doubt."

"Did you pay him all three sovereigns?

"Yes, all three! Here it is, entered in the book—Gibson, three pounds; you see it is exactly at the time you were at York, on railroad business."

"Oh, very well, it is of no consequence! I only asked, as I like to know that you are exact as to your disbursements. Good morning to you!" said Mr. Graves, and after glancing at the entry in the book, which Barton pointed out to him, he left the Savings' Bank.

CHAPTER XI.

An instant, a mere motion—the least impulse
Had swept him and all fears of mine from earth,
He was within my power.

BYRON.

"CONFOUND that fellow Barton, he was born to bring me into trouble!" was the first thought of Mr. Graves, as he hurried along the street leading from the Savings' Bank. "I am no sooner out of one scrape, than he plunges me into another, ten thousand times more dangerous; but fortunately, he is ignorant of the mischief he has done. The cross may escape observation, till it is impossible to discover whence

the sovereigns came, and the others are happily in my possession once more. I was a fool to risk them there—but time pressed—my credit was at stake, and one little deficit discovered, the whole accounts would have been examined, and then exposure and ruin must have been the consequence. But for the moment, all is safe; the cheque is burnt, the sovereigns in my pocket, and courage and good fortune must set all the rest in order, but at all events I must endeavour to get hold of the three gold pieces, if it be possible."

With this intention, Mr. Graves, instead of proceeding to the bank, as was his usual habit at that hour of the day, returned directly to his home.

His feelings during that walk, in spite of his reasoning and his usual audacity, were of the most fearful nature. But why should we describe the agonies and terrors of a worthless man, who led on gradually, by the lust of gain and by ambition, e, till he recognised no virtue but

in success, found himself, unexpectedly, menaced with exposure and ruin!

In the gambling of unhealthy commerce, and the corrupt state of society incident to an undue pursuit of gain, such characters grow rank, and if we have sought to describe the vices of perverted civilization, it is not as a mere idle amusement, but as a warning to the inexperienced, who are not aware of the dishonesty, and the restless vanity, and misery, which frequently lurk beneath the shadows of upstart luxury and wealth.

When Mr. Graves had first entered his superb dwelling house, it was with the unmingled satisfaction of triumphant vanity; but all such objects in this world speedily lose their value to the ambitious possessor, who forgets what he has attained, when once the prize is won; and this day when the banker mounted the broad steps of the entrance, he could not have approached a prison with more painful anticipations. The terrors of an evil conscience, which had long slumbered in his breast, were

roused to maddening activity, and aware, that his livid cheeks must betray his emotion, he hurried at once to his own room, in order, if possible, to escape his wife's observation. He locked the door behind him, and secure at length from interruption, he sunk down on a seat, as if the powers of mind and body, had both suddenly forsaken him. But this pause in his agony was not long—clenching his hands, his whole frame became rigid; by a sudden impulse, he resolved to be master of himself and his destiny, and starting from his chair, he walked once or twice up and down the room. It was not remorse which wrung his heart. That hour had not yet come! but he was distracted by self reproach at his own folly, in having by his ill judged confidence, placed himself in the power of such a miserable fellow as Barton.

Suddenly standing still, he unlocked a closet in a corner of the room, and taking the roll of sovereigns from his pocket,

he laid them carefully in a small writing desk, where several other similar parcels were already deposited. These he carefully counted. He then closed the desk, but when he endeavoured to re-lock it, from his agitation, or some other cause, the key stuck fast, and could neither be turned nor taken out.

At first he swore, and tried by impatience to effect his object, but this only made the matter worse. It was in vain that he essayed by every means in his power, for nearly a quarter of an hour, to turn the key, till at length finding it quite impossible to lock the desk, he covered it over with loose papers, pushed it back into a corner behind several bundles of parchment, and then locked the closet, of which he carefully deposited the key in his pocket.

He first saw his wife when they met at dinner; he never uttered a word to her during the whole meal, but as that was a very common occurrence, she followed his

example with perfect indifference, and as soon as the cloth was removed, and she had drunk her usual portion of wine, she arose and left the room.

A heavy, steady rain fell during the day, and when evening closed in, the darkness of the sky was only broken at intervals, when the rising wind made a rent in the gloomy clouds, and left a star visible between their moving masses. Dense mists came rolling up from the sea, and veiled even the lurid lights of the coal mines and the founderies, which were usually visible, glimmering on all sides, athwart the darkness of night, and throwing the reflection of their fires far over the vault of heaven.

In the lower streets of the town, the gas lamps, here and there, cast a long ray over the wet pavement, the rain pattered incessantly, water poured down in streams from the eaves of the houses, and not a living creature was to be seen, except, from

time to time, a workman returning wet and weary to his home.

At length, a solitary man entered one of the most wretched and narrow streets, where the evil odours, in consequence of the heavy rain, were almost insupportable. It might have been supposed that he had lost his way in the gloom of that stormy evening, so little did he resemble the ordinary foot passengers in that miserable neighbourhood, for he was well-dressed, was closely enveloped in a very large cloak, and carried a silk umbrella. But this was not the case.

He walked with the decided step of one well acquainted with the way, to a small house, near the centre of the street, and without knocking at the door, lifted the latch, and entered the humble dwelling, which he believed to be that of the sick workman Gibson.

The unwonted visitor to this abode of misery and death was Mr. Graves, but it was not charity which brought him thither,

in the darkness and the storm, when he trusted his unwonted presence in that quarter, would escape the observation of all curious eyes. He knew no such disinterested impulse. To his satisfaction, he found no one in the lower room, where all was dark and still. Ere long, hearing voices above, he groped his way to a narrow staircase, at the top of which he saw a light gleaming through the crevice of a door. His steps, as he ascended, seemed to attract no attention, for no one came out to receive him, and the same murmuring, as of a voice in prayer, continued uninterruptedly.

Into the chamber of a rich man, Mr. Graves would not have presumed to enter unbidden; but the possession of gold, or the want of it, makes wide distinctions to some men, and Gibson was poor, so Mr. Graves opened the door without the slightest feeling of delicacy, or respect, for the mysteries of death, and intruded, unbidden, unannounced, upon the sufferer's

privacy. Whatever spectacle of misery he might find within, was to him a matter of indifference! he had a burning anxiety in his own heart, far surpassing it. There was no light in the room he entered, except what fell from the door of an inner garret, where a candle was burning on a table. The voice of prayer seemed to have been interrupted by his approach, for as Graves closed the door behind him, he heard no sound, except the moans of a man, who lay on a low, truckle bed, in a corner near the window. He, at once, recognised this person to be Gibson, the founder, although haggard and emaciated by his long illness.

But what surprised and disappointed him greatly, was the order and cleanliness of the poor apartment, for he had counted on the sick man's poverty, as a means of attaining the object which brought him thither. It was evident, that as far as money and benevolent attention could contribute to alleviate the sufferings of disease,

and the wants of poverty, everything had been done in that poor and lowly dwelling. Nothing was wanting likely to be of use or comfort to the sick, and Graves felt, as he glanced around, that he had come too late.

Several weeks had now elapsed since Gibson had been attacked by the fever, and though he remained in a state of extreme debility, and his mind at times still wandered, the violence of delirium had subsided, and he was frequently perfectly conscious of all passing around him for several hours together. He knew Mr. Graves as he approached him, and conscious how long he had rejected all appeals to his compassion from those who had served him faithfully, his heart swelled with indignation at his unbidden intrusion. But he did not utter a word, and as Graves approached him, again closed his eyes as if in sleep.

Mr. Graves felt sure, that the voice of prayer had come from the inner garret,

and he knew that Gibson's wife was in a dying state, but his business was of such a nature, that it could not be postponed, even if she was there to hear and understand it all, and having no inclination to expose himself more than was absolutely unavoidable to the danger of infection, he did not think it worth while to ascertain her exact situation, but wishing Gibson a good evening, in a bland and friendly voice, he drew a chair, and sat down by his bedside.

"I am sorry to see you are such a sufferer," he said, after a pause. "I was not aware till to-day, that the fever had got into your house, or I would have sent a doctor, and have ordered every necessary relief to be given you."

He paused, but no answer was returned.

"A very sad case," he continued; "several ill in the family it seems, and you, poor fellow, left quite alone! Upon my honour I am very sorry for you. I had no idea of such distress, but shall take care

you are properly attended to for the future."

Gibson now raised himself on his elbow, and fixed his large piercing eyes for above a minute on Mr. Graves. As the light fell full upon his pallid, unshaven face, there was something so ghastly and appalling in its expression of scorn, that the guilty banker quailed beneath it.

"You have left me," he murmured, in a feeble voice, "and other honest men and their families, from whose life-blood you had wrung gold, in their years of health, to perish like dogs, without help, or compassion, and now you come to insult the dying with your offers of pretended charity. But it is too late! Go, go, where your gold is wanted. I thank Heaven, and all good men, I need it not," and he stretched forth his bony finger, and pointed to the door.

But Mr. Graves did not arise.

"I have been absent," he said, "and it has distressed me greatly, that my written

orders have not been obeyed, and the destitute relieved, as I commanded. I can understand your sufferings have made you irritable, my good fellow, but I trust you will soon judge me less severely. I found on my return from York, that you had drawn out your little deposit in the Savings' Bank, and thinking, perhaps, it might now be all expended, I have come at the first opportunity, to offer you five pounds for your immediate wants."

"I have no wants, I tell you!" answered Gibson, sharply, "I only wish you would leave me in peace. We all know you well enough to be no friend of ours."

"But you only received three sovereigns the clerk tells me," persisted the banker, "and those you must have spent ere now?"

"Yes! three sovereigns," repeated Gibson, laughing with fearful mockery. "Perhaps you would like to get them back again, Mr. Graves? Are you come for that?"

There was something in this question,

uttered in a voice which showed that the poor man's brain trembled on the verge of delirium, which made the blood of his listener run cold with horror. For a moment he shuddered at the possibility of his being suspected, but a second glance at the wild expression of poor Gibson's face restored his courage, and with a soft smile he replied, that as he had said, he would gladly replace the sovereigns and add a five pound note if they were still in the house.

The workman again laughed, but very faintly.

"It is very likely they should be in the house," he said, "when five of us have been ill, and two are dead and buried, since I received them."

"But you told me, you were in no want of money," rejoined Graves.

"That is no business of yours," muttered Gibson. "But go—go—" he exclaimed, starting up in his bed, in sudden delirium,

"the constables are after us; make haste! I did not steal the sovereigns, that I can swear. I hear them on the stairs! Go—go if you would save your neck from the gallows; somebody has shown them the little cross upon the gold! Why did you not save the child when the house was burning? Good Mr. Dalton's only child! Shame on you, Mr. Graves—shame on you! Don't talk of compassion for me, but look to yourself. The poor man scorns you, for his heart is pure."

Utterly exhausted, Gibson sunk back on his pillow as he uttered the last words. Graves arose, and gazed at him with feelings such as no language could describe. For an instant, as he looked at the helpless and feeble sufferer, he felt the possibility of stifling, at once, the voice of the accuser, who, for the first time, had spoken aloud the terrible secrets of his guilty soul. With him, perhaps, might perish the accusing gold; with that poor fragile body,

would expire the knowledge of his crimes! A few short minutes of life, stolen from the dying wretch—what matter? Hundreds had perished of the fever—why should not he? No one would enquire—no one would know that a human hand had forestalled the work of nature and stilled the dangerous babblings of delirium!

These thoughts passed quicker than the rushing of the stormy wind through his brain; and once, as he advanced a step nearer to the bed, he glanced around to assure himself that he was not observed. It was a moment of fearful temptation! spirits of evil seemed to people the chamber, and urge him to destruction—the personifications of a bad conscience and wicked passions.

But suddenly he heard a step moving in the inner chamber; a sigh was heaved, as by some one awakening from sleep, and murmured words were exchanged between two persons. He started as if struck by lightning; his legs trembled beneath him,

—the criminal audacity which had clenched his hand a moment before, when he had believed himself alone in the presence of the feeble and the dying, gave way in an instant to the coward's terrors, and overwhelmed by the consciousness of his evil thoughts, he did not venture to look around him—he uttered no farewell greeting to the poor sick man, but rushed at once from the room and hurried down the dark stairs, without other thought than that of effecting his escape, with the utmost rapidity, into the unfrequented streets.

As he approached the house-door, it was suddenly opened by a woman with a lantern in her hand—who, as the light fell upon him, uttered her suprise at his unexpected appearance. It was the poor nurse, paid by grace Dalton to attend on the Gibsons; and, to the horror of Mr. Graves, she recognised him immediately.

"Bless me! who would have thought to find you here, sir?" she hastily exclaimed. "But what has happened?—you

look as white as a corpse! Are the poor people dead up-stairs, that you seem so frightened?"

"Nothing, woman—nothing!" he cried, with ungovernable impatience. "I have no more time to lose here!"

"Heaven bless you for your good intentions, if you came to help the poor Gibsons—though you were not wanted—for others have been before you," persisted the nurse.

"Who has been before me?" demanded Graves, turning hastily round, before he reached the door, and he felt that on the answer to that question, his fate, perhaps, depended.

"Mr. Dalton and Miss Grace, sir," returned the woman, simply.

A bitter oath burst from Mr. Graves's lips. A new apprehension seized his mind.

"But Gibson had money, I understood," he said. "He drew three sovereigns from the Savings' Bank?"

"I have never seen gold since I came into the house," was the nurse's reply.

At this moment, heavy steps were audible crossing the chamber above, and Graves eagerly demanded if any one was in the house, except Gibson and his wife?

"I cannot say," was the answer, and Graves waited not to make further inquiries; and as there could no longer be any doubt that some one was astir in Gibson's chamber, he pushed past the astonished nurse without the slightest salutation, and hurried down the dark and lonely street. The woman looked after him for a minute or two, with no very friendly feeling, and then shutting the door, procedeed to make a fire and cook the provisions she had brought with her.

Graves had scarcely left the upper chamber when the person, whose movements in the inner garret had interrupted the terrible thoughts rapidly gaining the

mastery over his mind, came to the narrow door and there paused, as if to ascertain that Gibson was again alone.

The poor man's wandering mind seemed calmed, as his eyes rested on the tall and venerable figure, on which the rays of the flickering candle fell bright and sharp. An apparition of a being superior to the sons of earth could scarcely have been more welcome to his eyes, than the presence of that noble and benevolent man, to whose tender charity and humane love, he knew that his wife, his child, and himself, were indebted for their lives.

"Mr. Dalton," he said, holding out his emaciated hand, with a smile of unutterable gratitude. "God bless you, sir! have you been all this time with my poor Mary! Angels reward you, and bring you the best gifts of Heaven. If we live, sir, we will serve you with all our strength, and all our love; if we die, the poor man's gratitude will not be lost in Heaven."

"I believe you, my good friend," answer-

ed Mr. Dalton, taking the poor workman's feeble hand in his, "but you must be silent now. Mr. Graves has already excited you too much."

"You heard, sir ?"

"Yes, I heard."

"I am very glad, sir," was the sick man's reply.

"Say no more now," returned Mr. Dalton, "but take this drink, and then try to sleep. Your wife fell into a soft slumber after her heart was soothed by prayer, and with God's blessing you will be both better to-morrow."

"And you will come to me again, sir, if I may make so free, as to ask it?" inquired Gibson, fixing his hollow eyes, with looks of anxious love, on the face of Mr. Dalton, as he took the glass the gentleman held towards him.

"Yes, I will come, certainly—so try to sleep, and get strong, for we shall have much to talk about as soon as you can bear it."

"Thank you, sir. Thank you a thousand times," murmured the workman pressing Mr. Dalton's hand in his. "Heaven reward you," and he laid himself down to rest on the pillow, the gentleman had smoothed, murmuring a prayer for his beloved benefactor.

When all was still, Mr. Dalton descended to the kitchen, and having charged the nurse to attend carefully to the invalids, he wrapped his cloak about him, and left the house.

An extraordinary revolution had taken place in his mind since he had entered that lowly dwelling. Engaged in prayer with Gibson's suffering wife, she had dropped asleep, almost at the same moment, that Graves had entered the outer chamber. Well knowing that he hitherto refused to give any assistance to the suffering work people, he had been greatly astonished when he recognised the voice of the banker at the bed side of Gibson, and he had felt some curiosity as to the object of his visit.

Not supposing that under such circumstances, any secrets were likely to be discussed between the sick man and his former master, he had not judged it necessary to disturb himself, in order to make his presence known to Mr. Graves. He preferred, that his deeds of charity should remain unknown, to all but those who benefitted by them. But most unexpectedly, his attention was arrested, and his interest became powerfully engaged, when Graves alluded to the sovereigns.

There could no longer exist a doubt, that the banker was aware, that stolen gold had recently been paid fron the Savings' Bank, and that his anxiety to trace it was very great; and it appeared very extraordinary, that he had never informed him of a fact, in which he was so deeply interested; or if the money had passed through his hands in the bank, that he had not restored him the sovereigns, which he apparently well knew the mark of the cross proved to have been originally

his property. The raving of poor Gibson showed that the same suspicions had been awakened in his mind, as in Mr. Dalton's, and though that good man little suspected, that his presence had probably prevented Graves from committing murder, a glance he had caught of his face, as he listened to the sick man's upbraidings, left him no longer a doubt of his deep implication in the crimes, for which Charles Seaton had been punished. A hope sprung up in his heart, that the innocence of his once beloved nephew might yet be proved, but though it brought a feeling of pleasure, it was mingled with the bitterest apprehension a good man can feel; the fear of having committed an injustice against the innocent.

CHAPTER XII.

Patience herself would startle at this letter.
Shakspere.

MR. GRAVES returned to his home, after the terrible scene in Gibson's cottage, in a state of mind bordering on distraction, and he passed a sleepless night of fearful anxiety. He could not forget the steps he had heard, after he left the sick man's chamber, and he was haunted by the terrible suspicion, that Mr. Dalton had been in the inner garret during the whole time of his visit.

Again, and again, he endeavoured to

recall all that had passed, and to convince himself, that nothing had rellay fallen from the lips of the sick man, which considering his delirious state, could reasonably criminate him in the unbiassed opinion of any one. Sometimes he thought of visiting Mr. Dalton, in the morning, in order to ascertain if he had been a listener, or if his suspicions had been in any degree awakened. But there his courage failed him. Conscious of his guilt, he could not meet the scrutinizing glances of that honest man. Moreover, he persuaded himself that even where the marked sovereigns traced back to his possession, it would be of little consequence, for it was possible, that others beside those stolen, might have been marked in the same way. At length he felt quite sure, that nothing could be proved against him, except by one person, from whom he was convinced, he had nothing to dread, and somewhat tranquillized by these reflections, he slept several hours after the dawn of morning.

But when he made his appearance at his wife's breakfast table, he was in an exceedingly bad humour. Mrs. Graves wished him good morning, and poured out his tea as usual, but she was not in a more happy temper than her husband. When she wished, the day before, to purchase certain expensive jewels, necessary to complete her costume for a fancy ball, that night, at the assembly rooms—her jeweller had gently intimated to her, that he must decline giving her any further credit, till the very large sum, she was already indebted to him, had been discharged.

This was an insult which the saucy Martha Graves would once have indignantly resented—but, by degrees, she had become callous to such rebukes, and she now never troubled her head about anything but obtaining the object she had in view. To the ball she was determined to go most splendidly attired in the character of Anna Boleyn, in order to eclipse and mortify all those who, since the affair of the

fancy fair, had presumed to dispute her supremacy in the world of fashion. Money, therefore, must be obtained—and no where could it be obtained, except from Mr. Graves, and that, though not quite an impossibility, was a very desperate resource, on which she could by no means rely.

The time had long past since Martha had attempted, either by blandishments, or endearments, to gain a point from her husband. In fact, she was one of those women, who considering a great deal due to themselves, are ever ready to assert their rights with petulance and ill-humour, and who are always thinking of their own happiness, and their own gratification, and never of the interests, or pleasure, of their husbands.

Mr. Graves, on his side, pursued the same course, aed had, latterly, taken little pains to conceal his profound contempt and indifference to his wife's wishes, or tastes. Even a desire to maintain appearances, and a respect for public opinion

had almost ceased to influence them, and as the hopes, long entertained by Graves, that his wife would inherit Mr. Dalton's fortune, were diminished by the visible coldness of that gentleman towards her, he no longer thought it worth his trouble to humour her folly and extravagance, and treated her with daily increasing harshness. He had told her more than once, that as she had not brought him a sixpence, and never showed the slightest consideration for him, there was no longer any reason why he should indulge her caprices, or spare her feelings.

Irritated, almost beyond endurance, by the consciousness of his embarrassments, Mr. Graves was even more than usually rude and laconic in his treatment of his wife that morning; and his previous ill-humour was excited to absolute rage, by the perusal of a letter, put into his hands by a servant, during breakfast.

Mrs. Graves, who was anxiously waiting for a favourable moment to make her ap-

plication for the replenishment of her purse, saw that the mere sight of the handwriting, on the direction of this epistle, caused him unusual agitation. He hastily tore it open, and the hand that held it trembled, and he became perfectly ghastly with anger and consternation, as he perused its contents.

It was from one of the oldest and most respected directors of the Savings' Bank, informing him that very serious apprehensions having, for some time, become general, that the affairs of the Savings' Bank were in considerable disorder—he and several of the gentlemen, most interested in the concern, had held a private meeting, to consider what course was most advisable for them to pursue, in order to protect the interest of the public, and restore the credit of the establishment. It had then been decided, he added, to call a general meeting of the trustees, in order to examine the books, when they had no doubt that Mr. Graves, to whom the prin-

cipal management had long been confided, would be able to prove that the accounts were perfectly correct, and no real cause existed for the unpleasant reports in circulation.

This was what Graves had for sometime dreaded; and he had endeavoured, by every means in his power, to postpone an investigation, until a favourable turn in some of his extensive speculations, put it in his power to replace the very considerable sums belonging to the Savings' Bank, which it was quite true he had secretly used for his private gambling transactions. He had been too impatient to become rich, and reckoning with a false confidence on the negligence of his associates, he had long perverted the trust reposed in his hands, without apprehending the slightest danger of detection. But continued impunity had encouraged him to venture too far at last. The gambler does not ever win, and after risking the property of others, which he had obtained by such nefarious means, and

losing it, he saw himself at once placed on the brink of discovery and ruin. Had he known that the long obsequious assistant of his villany had been the principal cause of its discovery, he might have comprehended that he had committed a double error, in expecting that a rascal could ever be faithful to his employer. But Graves had been blinded by his contempt for this fellow's abilities, forgetting that very little talent suffices to be cunning, which has been wittily called the wisdom of fools.

When the banker had finished the perusal of the letter, he made no observation, but crushed it impatiently together in his hands, and after thrusting it into his pocket, he arose and walked once or twice up and down the room. This was certainly no very favourable moment for his wife to urge her petition, but she saw clearly that if she did not do it then, she should that day have no other opportunity, and after playing with her tea-spoon for some time, not knowing how to break the silence which

had become fearfully embarrassing, she at length ventured to address him.

"I hope, Mr. Graves," she said, "you have decided what dress you mean to wear at the fancy ball this evening, It is quite time I should know it, or it will be impossible for you to procure even the most ordinary costume. I should have known it a month ago, if you meant to have anything new, or really decent."

A malediction against Mrs. Graves and the fancy ball at the same time, was the gentleman's only reply.

"I am much obliged to you, my dear," she replied, very coolly, "but that wont help the matter in the least. To-night is the night of the ball, and I am quite determined not to go alone."

"Then you may stay at home, only leave me in peace, and don't torment me about your balls and your follies," was the gentleman's reply, and distracted by other thoughts, he continued to pace the room with hurried and agitated steps.

"Stay at home indeed," exclaimed his wife, now as angry as himself, "I like that idea indeed. Stay at home; that I shall certainly not do, at all events. A fine thing that would be for the world to talk about, to be sure! I don't doubt it would be all the same to you, if I were buried for life in a coal-pit to-morrow, but I am not to be thrust on one side in that way, Mr. Graves, I promise you! I know what is due to me, and my rich relatives, if you don't, and I shall go to the ball you may depend upon it, and what is more, in a proper and handsome manner, as is befitting Mr. Dalton's niece, and your wife."

"You may do as you please, madam, in this matter, and in every other," answered Graves, with a sneer; "but I wish from my soul I had never seen either your face or Mr. Dalton's. You have cost me ten thousand times more by your vanity and extravagance, than I shall ever get out of the old madman, were I to live to the age of Adam."

"Cost you, indeed!" cried the lady, with infinite disdain, "I wonder where you would find another woman with my expectations, who would have submitted to be treated in such a miserable, niggardly manner as I have been. I declare, ever since I was married, I have never received a sixpence from you, without scolding and cross looks, instead of having a handsome allowance at my own disposal, as Lady Giles, and other women of my station always insist on having."

"And to whom do you owe your station, madam, of which you are so proud?" demanded Graves, with pale and bitter rage. "I found you a beggar, and you have rolled in your carriage till you forget who placed you there. But you may have reason to remember your origin sooner than you expect, and by heaven you had better not provoke me further, or I may tell you things you will repent to hear."

"I have heard enough to drive the most patient woman on earth distracted," cried

Martha, losing all self-control, and totally forgetting the object she had in view when she commenced the conversation. "I tell you plainly, your conduct towards me for sometime past, has been insupportable. As long as I could flatter myself, that your ill-humour was occasioned by distracting business, or the like, I bore it with submission, but now I see clearly it is malice, determined malice, and I will support it no longer. I have been put to all kinds of inconveniences for the want of money which are discreditable to us both, and it cannot go on in this manner." Here she burst into tears. "It is a perfect scandal how you have treated me, Mr. Graves, and I have been fool enough to submit—but I tell you once for all, I must have a hundred pounds this morning, or you may have cause to repent it."

"Have you the audacity to threaten me, madam?" demanded the banker, fixing his keen, searching eyes for the first time that day on the face of his wife, which inflamed

with rage was not calculated to revive the memory of departed love. Then, laughing with bitter scorn, he added, "I am nevertheless bold enough to dare your displeasure! I wish you a very good morning, madam!"

Without saying another word, he then turned from her, and quitted the room.

The rage of Martha when she was thus left alone knew no bounds, but as there was no one near to listen to her complaints, she sunk back on her chair, and gave vent to her feelings in a violent flood of tears. Every cause of provocation she had ever received from her husband, in this evil moment recurred to her mind; all sense of duty, or of the solemn engagements into which she had entered before the altar, when she bound herself to him for life, all the generosity which he had in reality long shown towards her, were entirely obliterated from her recollection. She had never loved him, but she now absolutely detested him, and she resolved, however

he might despise her and her menaces, to find a way to teach him before long, that she was not a woman who would submit with impunity, to be treated with contempt and severity.

Money, she was resolved to procure, by some means or another; and, after the first violence of her indignation had subsided, she withdrew to her dressing-room, there, in solitude, to consider by what means she was most likely to obtain it, at Mr. Graves's expense. Martha, as she had proved in the management of her affairs, with the Reverend Mr. Black, was fully capable of inventing expedients under the pressure of necessity, and was not likely to be impeded in their execution by any scruples of conscience, or fear of consequences. In such measures she had a truly fertile genius, and no long time elapsed, that morning, before she had fully decided on a plan to pursue, which would not only relieve her from her present difficulties, but afford her a plentiful supply

of cash, for sometime to come, if the source from whence she derived it, remained undiscovered. It was necessary that her husband should leave the house, before she could put it into execution; and she listened long and anxiously for his departure.

Much to her annoyance, he was detained many hours after his usual time of going to the bank, by several persons, who came to him on business; and if she could have indulged the slightest hope of success, she would without further delay, have gone to her cousin Grace Dalton, to borrow the money. But she well knew it would now be as vain to apply to her, as it had been to request it of Mr. Graves.

It was already afternoon, and the banker, at length, left at liberty, was preparing to leave the house, when his servant brought him a second letter, and told him, that the bearer was waiting without, and requested particularly to speak with him, after he had perused its contents.

The letter was on very shabby paper, and the writing was evidently not that of a gentleman. It was clumsily sealed with a large red wafer.. In fact, it was one of those letters which ever awakens a species of dread, instead of pleasure, in the receiver. Graves thought it was probably a begging letter, and, at once, desired the servant to tell the man who brought it, whoever he might be, he must call again, for he was in no humour to be troubled by such an application, at such a moment. He had enough to do with his own affairs, without being bored to listen to those of other people, and money he had none to bestow.

The stranger returned for answer, that the business was pressing, and he could not call again; but he was ready to wait until Mr. Graves found it convenient to read the letter, the contents of which were, perhaps, not what that gentleman expected.

Graves did not like this reply; he hastily told the servant he would ring when

he wanted him; and he was no sooner left alone, than he eagerly tore open the letter, fully prepared to find its contents of an unpleasing description. He glanced his eye rapidly at the signature. It was sufficient to confirm his worst apprehensions; he then, with anxious haste, ran his eye over the epistle, and was somewhat reassured when he arrived at the conclusion.

"If that be all, it is better to give the fellow a small sum, and have done with him," he thought.

He, therefore, rang the bell, and, on the appearance of the servant, desired him to show the stranger in. The banker was then again left alone; and as he awaited the appearance of his unknown guest, many painful and embarrassing thoughts occurred to his mind. Figures arose from the past vividly before him, which he had long struggled to forget, in the success of his worldly ambition, and the glitter of newly acquired wealth. But they would not be forgotten, they had clung to him

like serpents, by day and by night; and though the letter he had received contained nothing alluding to these secret causes of torment, the name subscribed thereto, sufficed to occasion him both anxiety and terror.

CHAPTER XIII.

Forget it not; when you lie down to rest,
Let it be black among your dreams, and when
The morn returns, so let it stand between
The sun and you, as an ill-omened cloud.

BYRON.

MR. GRAVES had not remained long alone, when a tall, weather-beaten man, about forty years of age, who had once been handsome, but was now meagre, care-worn, and very shabbily dressed, with the reckless air of a country rake, who had seen better days, was ushered into the library.

After the banker had returned his salutation, he scarcely knew whether or not he should ask him to be seated, but the stranger settled that doubt for him very coolly, by taking a chair, and placing himself thereon almost at the very side of his host. Mr. Graves drew back a foot or two from him, as if to make him understand he ought to keep his distance.

"As you please, sir," said the man, with a smile; "we were pretty equal, for some years, after we were born, and may, perhaps, be so again, before we are laid in the grave; and, even now, I fancy, it is only a little money, more or less, which makes any difference between us."

Graves, with difficulty, restraind his rage, so as not to knock the fellow down, for the embarrassments which daily thickened around him, and the fear of the discovery and exposure of his deceptions had rendered him irritable in the highest degree. But though he maintained a resolute and stern silence, he cast a look at

his visitor, which would have sufficed to intimidate many. The stranger met his glance without shrinking, and again laughed with easy assurance.

"You are angry it appears, Mr. Graves," he said, "but it is I, on the contrary, who have a right to be so! Only I wish no contention. We will, with your permission, speak coolly on the subject of my visit. Knowing, as I have explained to you in my letter, that I am the brother of Lucy Forrest, you must pretty well understand what I am come about."

"I have no evidence but your own word, to prove your relationship to that unfortunate creature," answered Mr. Graves, whilst his feelings were of such a nature, that his hands became deadly cold.

"Oh, for that matter, if you are determined to be incredulous, I can easily bring her to confirm my assertions," answered the man. "She is waiting for my return, round the corner of the next street."

"I desire no such company," said Mr. Graves, sternly.

"There was a time when the girl was young, and pretty, and innocent, that you were of another opinion," returned Forrest with a bitter sneer, "though now, when you have driven her well nigh mad, by leaving her without help or protection, to shame and dishonour, you would gladly hear that she had died in a prison, or a ditch. It is all the same to you what becomes of the poor deserted victim of your vices, provided you can live on in your luxury, undisturbed by her reproaches, or the sight of her misery. Your conscience, it appears, gives you very little trouble."

"I know not what cause there is for my conscience to reproach me, for anything connected with Lucy Forrest," replied Graves, with recovered assurance, when he found that the man's accusations had taken a very different turn from what he had

expected. He now flattered himself that he was unacquainted with the only part of the poor girl's history, the discovery of which he dreaded. "If I spoke a few flattering words in the ear of a light girl," he continued, "there were many, no doubt, who had done so before me, and though, perhaps, I may have been the richest of her admirers, it is somewhat late, after the lapse of so many years, to call me to account, and expect that I should maintain one, who has long fallen into a course of the most shameless and abandoned vice."

"It is never too late to call a heartless sinner to account," retorted Forrest, with a severity which gave a certain dignity to his still expressive, and intellectual countenance. "You may be thankful, sir, that I left this country for Australia, many years ago, before I was aware that you were the girl's seducer, or you might in those days, when I was other than I am now, have felt the weight of a good horse-whip upon your back, instead of being

peaceably asked, as you now are, to make some small reparation for all the suffering and misery which you have brought upon my only sister, by the indulgence of your miserable vices."

"You are audacious," said Mr. Graves, who for secret motives best known to himself, was compelled to listen to this language with some appearance of composure, instead of following the impulse of his feelings, and ordering the fellow to be turned at once out of the house.

"Yes, I am audacious," was the reply, "I also have had my trials in life, and I fear neither you, nor any man. I have seen the world in many shapes, Mr. Graves, and the little great man of a country town strikes no terror into me, I have nothing to lose."

"And you would fain turn your audacity to account, it seems." returned the banker, "by bullying me out of money, to supply your extravagance. I have not forgotten your character in early days."

"I demand nothing for myself," said Forrest, without appearing to have heard the last observation. "I have found my sister, whom you have ruined, actually starving. I have not the means of relieving her, and it is fitting that you should. It is a disgrace for a man who pretends to call himself a gentleman, and who has wealth at his command, to leave the ruined victim of his evil passions to perish like a dog in the streets."

"It is somewhat bold, methinks," answered Graves, "to bring such charges against me, on the mere testimony of a mad wench, whose oath would not be accepted in a court of justice"

"So, it is her madness on which you have counted for impunity," retorted Forrest, indignantly. "The madness which was the consequence of your own cruelty. But you deceive yourself, if you think you can thus escape the punishment and exposure you merit. If I cannot obtain reparation, I can have revenge, and though

I am ruined and poor, my heart is not yet turned to stone like yours. The disgrace of my only sister—the child I nursed upon my knee, by my father's hearth—is harder to bear than all the trials of poverty it has been my cruel lot to indure; and I declare before Heaven, if you reject the honest appeal I have this hour made to your justice, and your compassion, the account, which is now standing between us, shall be settled before long in a manner you little expect,"

"If your affliction, of which you talk so much, can be healed by money, I very much doubt its intensity," returned the banker, sarcastically, "and if you seek nothing from me but the value of your sister's honesty, that matter can very speedily be arranged between us. If I mistake not, you are the same person who took out the young sister of the convict, Mr. Seaton, to Australia, when you went out there as a colonist. You were pretty well paid for that service, I believe, a

second sum of money having been remitted to you after the child's arrival there ?"

"I am that unfortunate man," answered Forrest "and I fulfilled the task, I undertook, to the best of my ability. My wife and I treated the child as our own, and she was delivered, well and happy, to her brother's care. But matters have not gone well with me in the colony. My wife died before I had been many months there—my speculations turned out ill—and I lost the little capital I had brought out from England. I then contrived to struggle on, though without profit, for many years, till the love of home, and the hope of finding my sister still alive, induced me to return with an empty purse, and a broken constitution. I had better have remained where I was, for my place has been long filled up here, and I should have died in ignorance of my sister's shame."

"Your lot appears somewhat hard, certainly," said Graves, "and though I cannot admit that I am under the slightest

necessity of complying with your demands, or your threats, yet I am not unwilling, out of compassion, to make you a present to assist Lucy, whose distress you say is so great. These five pounds may, perhaps, content your wishes ; and, for the future, I must desire that you leave me unmolested.

Then, drawing a purse from his pocket, he took out a bank note, and held it towards his visitor.

" Five pounds!" said Forrest, coolly taking the money ; " I thank you for your alms, Mr. Graves, and I hope if ever you are in a situation to feel the want of it, that you may remember the extent of your generosity to one whom you have robbed of her good name—her means of livelihood—her peace of mind—and even of her reason. Five pounds is the price you pay for all this ruin, and then you flatter yourself, no doubt, you are a man of honour, and a gentleman. But I will detain you no longer, Mr. Graves, you may possibly hear

from me shortly, at a time, and in a manner you least expect."

Then hastily arising, without further salutation he turned to leave the room.

"Explain yourself, sir,—I insist on your explaining yourself—what do you mean? how do you mean?" cried Graves, springing impetuously from his chair under the influence of a new terror.

But Forrest neither paused, nor made any reply, only as he turned to close the door behind him, he cast on Graves a glance of such a malignant, such an exulting expression, that, dismayed and even terrified, the banker stood petrified for a few moments without making another effort to detain him. But no sooner had the street door closed behind him, than his faculties returned, and convinced that this man must be purchased at all hazards, he seized his hat, and hurried without further delay in pursuit of him.

But the evil conscience of Graves had put a false interpretation on Forrest's

glance, or he would have spared himself this trouble, and have taken other measures to obviate the fulfilment of his menaces. As it was, he felt convinced he had committed a great error in treating this man so cavalierly, but it was too late to repair it, for before he reached the street door, he was unexpectedly detained by a visit from one of the trustees of the Savings' Bank, whom he met in the passage leading to his study.

To such a man, under existing circumstances, it was impossible to plead a previous engagement, and Mr. Graves, completely involved in the meshes of his own intrigues, was once more compelled to assume a smiling countenance, and return with his guest to discuss the business of the proposed investigation into the affairs of the bank.

Mr. Graves's state of mind, rendered it impossible for him to conduct this interview with his usual talent and hypocrisy. He could offer no objections, when his visitor

informed him, that in consequence of the unpleasant reports in circulation, with regard to serious defalcations in the funds of the Savings' Bank, and the confusion and great complexity in the books of that establishment, the trustees and managers had determined, recently, in a private meeting, to appoint an accountant to go through the whole of the papers. This news was sufficiently startling, for Mr. Graves well knew that he had appropriated above thirty thousand pounds, which robbery, on nearer investigation, must indubitably be proved against him. Nevertheless he made a show of great indignation that such steps should have been taken without his participation, and that he had been treated with such a total want of confidence by those with whom he had hitherto been on the best terms, and who invariably professed the warmest friendship towards him. It was a personal insult, he said, for which he must demand further explanation.

But he was yet more appalled, when in answer to these remonstrances, he learnt from his guest, that a barrister appointed by the Commissioners of the National Debt, for the purposes of the Savings' Banks Acts, was expected to arrive in the town that very evening, in order to promote the proposed inquiry. That a time and place would then be fixed, for a thorough investigation, so that the suspicions now entertained, might be elucidated with all possible despatch, and the public mind put at rest.

Graves was dismayed and overpowered to find that he had men of business opposed to him, whom all his wiles would prove inadequate to deceive, and though he strove to conduct himself through the whole interview, as if no suspicion of embezzlement could possibly attach to him, his visitor was forcibly struck by the unusual embarrassment and humility of his manner.

This gentleman knew perfectly well that many openly accused Mr. Graves as the defaulter, but he was a good, easy man,

whom the banker had long blinded by his flattery, and perfectly convinced of his honesty, he had rather pressed forward than retarded investigations, which he trusted would remove every shadow of suspicion of Mr. Graves from the minds of others, and if there really had been peculation, expose the true criminal. But when he left the banker's residence that day, it was with very altered feelings, and a very different opinion of that gentleman's real position.

When Mr. Graves was once more alone, he desired his servant, in a hoarse and hurried voice, to deny him to all visitors; he then further secured himself from interruption, by locking the door of his study, and sat down to consider his actual position, and the course he had to pursue, with as much coolness as the excited state of his mind permitted. He felt he had arrived at a point, when all hope of preserving his credit and his character, was entirely at an end. Both must be inevi-

tably destroyed by the result of the legal investigations at the Savings' Bank. The only consideration now was, how he might best provide for his personal security, and collect as much money as possible together, in the course of that and the following day.

Mr. Graves had determined on flight, and longer than eight-and-forty hours, he could not delay its execution. No other way remained by which he could hope to escape punishment, and the confiscation of his whole property to defray his debts.

And this was the result of all his labour and all his talent, and his ambition, and all the intrigues and the deceit by which he had expected to triumph over honest men, and turn their simplicity to his profit. He had lived a life of lies, and at length exposed and branded with infamy, nothing was left to him but the miserable hope of being able to escape, and to drag on a life of shame, in perpetual banishment from his native land.

He no longer perplexed himself concerning the meaning of Forrest's parting menaces; he should be far beyond the reach of his revenge before he could effectually take any steps to put it in execution, were it even the very worst which he had to dread; the examination of the accounts at the Savings' Bank, he knew must at least occupy a fortnight before any decided result could be arrived at, so for that day and the next he considered he had nothing to fear. In his own private bank were considerable deposits unemployed; these he determined to appropriate, and to close at once with an offer for the purchase of the corn and flour laid up in his granary, though he had hesitated the day before to accept it, being in expectation of a rise in price.

If he thought of his wife at all, it was with a sort of malicious satisfaction, that her pride would soon be humbled by sharing his fall, and when ruined by his disgrace, she would be compelled at length to ac-

knowledge that she had owed her long enjoyment of wealth and luxury to his good fortune, and to his generosity.

He knew that his house, and everything he was compelled to leave behind him, must be sacrificed to his creditors, and Martha, at once, reduced to beggary; but he felt, that were she compelled to starve, she richly deserved it, for the heartless ingratitude she had shown, in return for all his indulgence and forbearance. Had she not encouraged his extravagance, and love of display, he thought, he should not now be a ruined man; so apt are all to throw the burthen of just reproach from themselves on others.

Graves spent many hours of that morning, overlooking and arranging papers; destroying many, and selecting and binding others up into small parcels, which he thought necessary to take with him. When this was done, he unlocked the door, rang the bell, and told the servant he should not dine at home. He then went out, de-

termined not again to meet his wife before his departure. He wished to avoid all further altercation, or her renewed demands for money.

But Martha was perfectly aware of the moment of his departure. She had been most impatiently awaiting it; and no sooner had the door closed behind him, than she started up, in order to fulfil her meditated plan, for, as the afternoon was already far advanced, she felt she had no time to lose.

Twice, during that day, her jeweller, having heard of the proceedings pending at the Savings' Bank, and other reports, very unfavorable to Mr. Graves's credit, became most anxious to procure the payment of his bill; and it had been with extreme difficulty, on his second fruitless application, that Martha had prevailed on him to leave the house, by promising to call on him that afternoon, with the whole amount of her debt. She could no longer hesitate, therefore, as to the commission of

the deed, by which she knew she should, at once, become possessed of the money. now absolutely necessary to tranquillise her importunate creditor.

She sent her maid out on a message, to a distant part of the town; she ordered herself to be denied to all visitors, and told the man-servant, that her carriage must be at the door in a quarter of an hour. But hardened as she was, the act she was about to commit was of a character so totally different from the petty intrigues in which she had hitherto been engaged, that when the moment for its perpetration arrived, her courage almost failed her. She feared the consequences of discovery, but like all reckless persons, she soon persuaded herself, that she might yet find means to obviate all danger of detection; that, after all, there could be no crime in taking what belonged to her husband, if he was so mean as to deny her reasonable requests; her difficulties were real and pressing—the relief immediate—

and she flattered herself, the future was uncertain.

She had dined early; and she now strove to fortify her courage by drinking nearly half a bottle of Madeira. This done, she ascended to her husband's bed-chamber, with a black velvet bag on her arm, containing a considerable number of keys.

She had discovered, sometime before, that one of these keys readily opened the closet there, where her husband kept many of his papers. She likewise know, there was a writing desk in this same closet, containg a very considerable sum in gold, and she trusted that some of her other keys might possibly open the desk.

All this she had observed in the dead of the night, when her husband supposing she slept had taken out the sovereigns he subsequently deposited at the Savings' Bank.

With a trembling hand she put her key into the lock of the closet door; it opened

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there, although the lamps were not yet lighted.

Her creditor, who had begun to reproach himself for attending to her promises, was agreeably surprised by her appearance—particularly when she offered none of her husband's notes for his acceptance, but counted out the whole sum she owed him, in gold.

Although she purchased the ornaments she desired to wear that evening at the ball, she gave herself great airs, as if highly offended by his impertinence, in presuming to dun her for his money, and she gave him to understand it was the very last time, she would ever enter his shop. The jeweller only smiled—said he was very sorry —muttered something about a large account he had to make up, and handed her a receipt. Martha then left his shop, triumphant in the success of her expedient.

But her exultation did not last long.

With falsehood she was perfectly familiar —but that was her first theft! However courageous she might have been before hand, she felt very uneasy and uncomfortable after it. She was afraid—the sense of guilt haunted her—and when she decked herself in the jewels she had so much desired to possess, she felt as if every one who saw her, must know that they were stolen. But it was of her husband, she had the greatest terror.

She knew not wherefore, but she now felt, for the first time, that he must have some mysterious reason for keeping the secret hoard of gold in his closet; and she bitterly repented her recklessness in venturing to appropriate a part of it. She only recovered her spirits when she had resolved to sell a diamond cross on the morrow, which he had formerly given her, and immediately afterwards, to replace the money.

Her conscience thus soothed, she determined to enjoy herself without further

care at the fancy ball at the assembly rooms that evening. But still, in defiance of her efforts, she felt an unconquerable anxiety, which could not be entirely forgotten, even when surveying her portly person in a full length mirror magnificently attired in the character of Anna Boleyn.

THE END OF VOL. II.

T. C. Newby, Printer, 30, Welbeck-street, Cavendish-sq

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